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The Revolt of the Body

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The Unforeseen Wilderness

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October Thoughts

BERNARD BERGONZI:
Letter from England

Poems by HAYDEN CARRUTH, ROGER HOBDELL, RICHMOND LATTIMORE, DAVID PAUL.

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THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. It is a member of The Council of Literary Magazines and is indexed in the Social Sciences and Humanities Index.

Subscription $6.00 per year in U. S.; foreign including Canada $7.00. Single copy $1.75. U. S. distributor: B. De Boer, 188 High Street, Nutley, N. J. 07110. Subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Back issues and reprints of Volumes I—XXI available from AMS Press, Inc., 56 East 13th Street, New York, N. Y. 10003. Microfilms of Volumes I—XXI available from University Microfilms, Inc., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich. 48106.

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Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editors.

Printed in the United States of America. Printing office: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205. Second Class postage paid at Richmond, Virginia.

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VOLUME XXIII
NUMBER 4
WINTER 1970-71

THE Hudson Review

Essays

Towards a Science of Form — LANCELOT LAW WHYTE — 613
The Unforeseen Wilderness — WENDELL BERRY — 633
With Photographs by RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD
The Revolt of the Body — OCTAVIO PAZ — 648

Poems

In Memoriam; The Lake Island of Iannina; First Flight; The Last Train out of White River Junction; Atlantis Now; The Flowering Meadows; When you are old: after Ronsard, RICHMOND LATTIMORE, 666; I Know, I Remember, but How Can I Help You; The End Again; This Decoration; Too Tenuous; Rimrock, Where It Is, HAYDEN CARRUTH, 672; The Frontiers of Summer, ROGER HOBDELL, 677; A Greek Island, JOSEPH BENNETT, 681; A Young, Late Pharaoh, DAVID PAUL, 683; Waiting for the Warden, STEPHEN SANDY, 684.

Chronicles

Melodramatic Truths — STEPHEN FARBER — 685
Paul Klee — CHARLES W. MILLARD — 696
Max Ernst: Passed and Pressing Tensions — LUCY R. LIPPARD — 701
Music and Ballet — B. H. HAGGIN — 710
Theatre — JOHN SIMON — 721

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Reviews

October Thoughts	VERNON YOUNG	733
Frost Departmentalized	WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD	747
Ezra Pound, the Poet?	GUY DAVENPORT	754
A Standing Civil War	EDWARD W. SAID	759
Rumors of Mighty Victories	MARVIN MUDRICK	767
The Great Reviewer	ROGER SALE	772

Report

Letter from England	BERNARD BERGONZI	599

Notes on Contributors 598

Index to Volume XXIII 779

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Notes on Contributors

LANCELOT LAW WHYTE,* British natural philosopher, is best known for his *Next Development in Man, The Unconscious before Freud,* and other works on the history of ideas and problems of form.

WENDELL BERRY's "The Unforeseen Wilderness" is from a book of the same title, with photographs by RALPH EUGENE MEATYARD,* to be published by The University Press of Kentucky this April.

OCTAVIO PAZ is the eminent Mexican poet and man of letters. "The Revolt of the Body" was delivered at Princeton University in November, 1969, as the first in a series of Hudson Review Lectures to be presented under the auspices of the Department of Romance Languages. MONIQUE FONG* is a conference interpreter, whose translation of John Cage's *Silence* into French has just been published.

RICHMOND LATTIMORE, the noted poet and translator, teaches at Bryn Mawr.

HAYDEN CARRUTH's new book of poems, *For You,* has recently been published by New Directions; he is also the editor of a new anthology of 20th-century American poetry, *The Voice That Is Great Within Us,* published by Bantam Books.

ROGER HOBDELL lives in London and has had two books of poems published there by Scorpion Press, *Journey Beyond the Carapace* (1960) and *Sonnets* (1962).

DAVID PAUL lives in London and is spending this year teaching creative writing at Montana University.

STEPHEN SANDY* is a young poet who lives in Bennington, Vermont.

CHARLES W. MILLARD is Curator of Nineteenth-century Art at the Los Angeles County Museum.

LUCY R. LIPPARD's book of essays, *Changing,* has just been published by E. P. Dutton.

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD teaches in the English department of Amherst College.

GUY DAVENPORT is Professor of English at the University of Kentucky. He is currently completing a book on Pound.

EDWARD W. SAID is Professor of English at Columbia University. He is the author of a book on Conrad, and of a forthcoming book on Swift.

MARVIN MUDRICK's *On Culture and Literature,* a collection of essays most of which appeared originally in this Review, was published by Horizon Press this autumn.

BERNARD BERGONZI is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Warwick, and the author of *The Early H. G. Wells* and *Heroes' Twilight.*

Asterisk indicates a new contributor.

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Report

Letter from England

"AND WHY SHOULD ANYONE in America be interested in what's happening *here*?" asked a young critic when I told him that I'd been invited to contribute this letter. There were, as I recall, ironies of tone as well as content in his remark: its full sense might have been that of course we all know there's nothing really going on in England these days, but even if there were the Americans wouldn't want to know about it. These reflections were brought to a sharper focus in my mind last September, when I attended a conference in Holland on the marvellously broad theme of "Literature and Culture," organized by Seymour Betsky, Professor of American Literature at the University of Utrecht. Betsky had called together a talkative collection of American and English critics, plus one or two novelists and sociologists, and a number of Continental critics, publishers and editors; his aim was to bring up to date the enquiries about the relation between imaginative literature and industrial culture that were begun in *Scrutiny* in the nineteen-thirties, and to direct them at the American situation. We deliberated for four days in the Hotel Noordzee at Noordwijk, a bland seaside resort once favoured by Thomas Mann. Outside the windows the North Sea looked grey and uninviting, and the waves broke on an empty beach. Inside, the cigarette smoke grew thicker and the polite exchanges between the English and the Americans became perceptibly sharper. The "Anglo-Saxons," to use the absurd collective term beloved of General de Gaulle, did not always see eye to eye. And yet it was on either side of this stretch of grey water that Anglo-Saxon civilization grew up. I have forgotten the Anglo-Saxon I once learnt at Oxford, but I tried to remember a few phrases and thought about Beowulf and the Seafarer: here, after all, was where it started. The language that began with them, having literally changed out of all recognition, has now become by an accident of history the common speech of a large part of humanity, and the most generally used form of communication throughout the entire world. It is, of course, ludicrously unsuitable for such a purpose: the legacy of the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes and the Normans, combined with the Great Vowel Shift of the sixteenth century, have made it uniquely tricky in orthography and pronunciation, and given it a huge vocabulary which is fine for writing poetry in but is excessive for the simple forms of utilitarian communication. The invention of Basic English during the Second World War was an attempt to simplify the language artificially,

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which seems to have failed in its original version; nevertheless, whether simplified or not, English is the international language of airline pilots, and the most convenient medium for the Chinese instructors of African guerillas, for Black Power leaders denouncing white civilization, for intellectuals from different parts of India when they meet, and for Jean-Paul Sartre when he converses with Fidel Castro. It is also the language of poets and novelists in Chicago and Dublin, Lagos and Wellington. And yet, as the English language becomes more and more diffused throughout the globe, the literature written in it gets more culturally particularized. In the eighteen-eighties it was still possible for Matthew Arnold to dismiss with derision a reference to "American literature"; if a book was written in English, he claimed, then it was part of English literature, and there was no more to be said. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature*, which emphasized the exoticism of American literature, made such an assumption no longer tenable, and at the same time laid down the possibility of studying that literature as a quite distinct subject. And throughout the world for many readers "English" literature is now primarily American literature. All these thoughts were nicely epiphanized for me when I sat at dinner one evening in the Hotel Noordzee in the company of a French novelist and a Dutch publisher, who were carefully discussing in impeccable English ("British" English, I might add) the respective merits of John Barth—sitting impassively in person across the room—and Donald Barthelme.

Whether the Noordwijk conference actually covered much ground in the direction that Seymour Betsky wanted, I doubt; nevertheless, it was a profoundly interesting experience, which left me with a lot to think about on the subject of Anglo-American cultural relations. The most prominent member of the American group was the genial Leslie Fiedler who, with the support of one or two acolytes, took every opportunity of advancing his own heady mixture of apocalypticism and mythopoeic prophecy. Fiedler's position may not have fundamentally changed since he published "The New Mutants" five years ago, but the manner has hardened. He is no longer, as in that essay, uneasily poised between the old literacy of the past and the new polymorphous illiteracy of the post-human future: "Wandering between two worlds, one dead,/The other powerless to be born." By now, he believes, the future has already happened and there is no point in fighting it. The old elitist culture is washed up, and the most the critic can do is tune in to what the Kids are thinking and feeling, trailing along behind their vital experience as best he can. Fiedler is a great platform performer and he delivers his ideas with histrionic verve, even though some of his favourite gags are now wearing a little thin: the one about Marshall McLuhan reminding him of the body-fluids man in *Dr. Strangelove* was very good when it first appeared

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in *Partisan Review* in 1965, but since then I have twice heard him produce it in lectures, on each occasion with the same engaging air of having just thought of it. Lecturing at the University of Leiden, during the conference, Fiedler was entertaining if predictable, but his basic position was dogmatically firm. Things were going to happen as he described, all over the world, and there could be no argument about it; if the British didn't like the idea, then that was just their *ressentiment,* but the future would catch up with them before long. Nevertheless, the British, who think they know a trendy when they see one, remained sceptical. W. W. Robson replied to Fiedler in a mild and urbane speech that ended with an ironical quotation from Max Beerbohm about the importance of keeping up with the masters of modern thought as they pass steadily onward into oblivion. Dan Jacobson expressed a sharper criticism in private conversation; recalling that Fiedler had entitled one of his books with the Melvillian phrase, *No! In Thunder,* Jacobson remarked that he now ought to call one, *Yes Please!* Another contributor pointed out that Fiedler's position was a mirror-image of the elitist minority culture that he dismissed. This struck me as a cogent criticism: substituting Burroughs and Kesey and Vonnegut and "the kids" for Eliot and Dante and Donne and "orthodoxy and tradition," the tone and manner might be that of some classicism-besotted contributor to the *Sewanee Review* in about 1935.

Until recently I might have thought that Fiedler was more right than not and that total cultural transformation was inevitable, even though, unlike him, one didn't much welcome the prospect. I even wrote, in a book of essays called *Innovations* that I edited in 1968, that "for the English, America is the future." It is easy to think along these lines if one is a technological determinist of a McLuhanite kind and ignores the countless other elements that complicate cultural development. At all events, I no longer believe it, at least not in such a sweeping, clear-cut fashion. English culture, like the whole Western world, remains wide open to every kind of American influence, but the rate of assimilation does not seem to have particularly speeded up over the last few years. Indeed, observation of the students I teach doesn't suggest that they are any more like Fiedler's Kids now than they were four or five years ago. Listening to the deliberations at Noordwijk, I realised that much of the American concern with the future, no matter how urgently expressed, was in fact very traditional, and merely the latest variation on some of the time-honoured themes of American literature: the belief in a total transformation of consciousness that will be apocalyptic or utopian, or perhaps both; and the democratic aversion, long ago analysed by Tocqueville, to elites and distinctions and inequalities of attainment. There was some reassurance for an Englishman to realise finally that a formula confidently presented as global and inescapable, was in fact merely a

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projection from a local and particular set of attitudes, and that Americans and Europeans may not, after all, be condemned to the same future. Which is not to say that the English can afford to be complacent: the accents of *fin de siècle* apocalypticism are common in England these days, suggesting that in a few decades we may all be starving to death in an overcrowded island. But let us, at least, contemplate our very own disasters.

The conference deepened my conviction that American and English literary cultures are now further apart than ever, and that we do indeed have two literatures divided by a single language (or more or less single). This is indeed an unprecedented situation, but not necessarily a depressing one, provided it is approached without delusions. As was very apparent at Noordwijk, Americans are great navel-gazers, so agonisingly immersed in the problems of their own literary culture that they find it genuinely hard to believe in the existence of any other, even, or particularly, in England. (I except, of course, those engaging anglophiles who make a point of discussing the minutiae of Anthony Powell or Roy Fuller, and who are a special breed.) It was Fiedler who, after spending some months at the University of Sussex, magisterially announced in the *New Statesman* in 1968 that "there is no scene in the arts in England." And there are moods, of lassitude and boredom with the whole debate, and general *jemenfoutisme,* when one is inclined to agree with him. Agreed, no-one has written a *great* book in England for a long time, but then when did the last one appear in America? I suspect that the last to be published in the West was Lampedusa's *The Leopard,* which came out ten years ago, and that the next work of great literature in English may be written by a West Indian or an African and will stand a good chance of being ignored in both London and New York. At a lower level, it is true that there is often greater linguistic vitality in American writing than in English; but at the same time, American books are likely to be more vigorously promoted than British ones, and the "democratic" absence of critical standards means, I suspect, that rubbish is more readily published in America than in England, though I wouldn't, for a moment, want to underestimate the amount of rubbish that gets published here too. In fact, the comparison of fairly minor talents in a transatlantic context is not an easy thing, so dominant are the cultural differences. How, for instance, could one fairly assess the relative merits of the fiction of Jeremy Larner and Melvin Bragg, or the poetry of Richard Brautigan and Douglas Dunn? And who, for that matter, can convince me that William Carlos Williams is the great poet which he is commonly taken to be by many Americans? *Paterson* has always defeated me: I picked it up again the other evening, full of good will, but found it as unrelentingly dull as ever. To try to investigate such incapacity—and assuming it is that, rather than that I am right and millions of Americans wrong—would, I suspose, be less a matter for

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literary criticism than for the sociology of knowledge. And there are many similar instances, like the general English coolness about such admired American figures as Barth and Pynchon. It is true that Burroughs has a certain underground reputation, but I suspect that he is more talked about than read. He is also becoming a respectable subject for academic study; I was recently asked to act as external examiner for a dissertation on Burroughs submitted to the University of Birmingham, which is far from being an avant-garde institution. In such ways is the literature of extremity and revolt institutionalized, as Lionel Trilling described in *Beyond Culture.*

But after such *ressentiment* and irritable self-communings, what, in fact, do I have to say to the readers of this Review about what is happening now and in England? The difficulty is to try to answer the question straight, without sinking into the vein of ironic self-mockery shown by the friend I quoted in the opening sentence of this letter. The least I can do is to name a few names. Among writers in their thirties, I have been recently impressed by Ian Hamilton's first book of poems, *The Visit,* and David Lodge's fourth novel, *Out of the Shelter,* which is an intelligent and generally light-hearted dissection of the problems of Anglo-American culture-clash. Both these writers have other claims to attention: Ian Hamilton has for several years edited *The Review,* a little magazine of poetry and criticism which manages to preserve an unfalteringly high standard; David Lodge, as well as being a novelist, is one of the most perceptive critics we have, and is author of a well-known study, *Language of Fiction.* Among writers in the same age-bracket I would look with expectation at new novels by Michael Frayn, John Fowles, Piers Paul Read, Julian Mitchell, B. S. Johnson, Angela Carter, Maureen Duffy, Margaret Drabble and her sister, Antonia Byatt; that is to say, without necessarily rushing to the bookstore on publication day, I would regard these as interesting and still developing talents. Some critics see David Storey as the finest novelist of this generation, but he hasn't published a novel since *Radcliffe* in 1963, and has lately devoted himself to drama. In poetry, Ted Hughes has just published *Crow,* a verse sequence which I haven't yet read in its entirety, but which is an attempt to bring a new kind of surrealist and mythopoeic feeling into English poetry, and has been respectfully greeted by the reviewers. Poetry is in fact selling well these days, in a way that surprises everyone, not least the publishers, though no highbrow poet can compete with the great success of the *Selected Poems* of Mrs. Mary Wilson, wife of the former Prime Minister. Her forms are traditional and her subjects wholesomely familiar and honestly sentimental. I can't say I would want to spend very long on her poems myself, but the volume has gone into many impressions already, and it would be an illuminating essay in the sociology of literature to find out what widely diffused expectations it appears to be satisfying. Meanwhile, Philip Larkin, who is still the best poet of the post-war

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years (*hélas?*), has been publishing in the magazines again after a long silence, so no doubt we can expect another glum and honest and beautifully written book of poems, full of exact physical and moral notations of the Way We Live Now, but no damned nonsense like excitement and energy.

Excitement and energy are, indeed, qualities that the English long ago decided that they can do without, having had enough of them in those vanished epochs when the Empire was being built up and red was bloodily scattered over the map. If you want that sort of thing, the implication is, you can go to America where they are found equally in the moonshot and the Vietnam adventure, and where the annual murder rate in many large cities is as great as that of the whole United Kingdom. We do, of course, have our own local enclave of excitement and bloodiness in the bizarre backdoor province of Northern Ireland, an unliquidated fragment of Empire from Elizabethan times about which nothing can be done, except to send soldiers to prevent tribal fanatics from tearing each other apart. (Though even there surprisingly few people actually get killed.) Personally, I would be happy to see a United Ireland, with the Irish Republic taking over the jurisdiction that it claims in its constitution, and the British taxpayer saved a huge annual subsidy, but it would take a civil war to achieve it.

But Ulster seems a long way off, and is easily forgotten, except when the television news shows a fresh night of rioting in Belfast or Londonderry. What is likely to be of more immediate concern to the British people is the realization, which is only slowly dawning, of the kind of government they voted in last June. The Labour government had been economically incompetent, though it considerably improved during its last year or so in office, and was dishonest in many of its actions; nevertheless, on matters of social policy its basic attitudes were right if unattractively presented. But Labour lost on the inflation issue, which was skilfully exploited by the Conservatives, particularly in their appeal to women voters. (One theory is that working-class housewives, tired of rising prices, abstained or voted Conservative; their husbands had in fact benefited by inflationary wage increases but hadn't passed any on to their wives.) So the Conservatives came to power, to the consternation of the opinion polls and all those, like Harold Wilson, who had believed in them, and then revealed that, despite their election promises, they hadn't any instant remedies for inflation. It has, however, become more and more apparent that the government of Edward Heath, unlike the Conservative administrations of the fifties and early sixties, isn't going to pursue vaguely centrist policies which are likely to command general support. They are ideologically committed to right-wing programmes, and are making Goldwaterite noises about "setting the people free" and "letting people stand on their own two feet" and reducing the role of the government in the running of the

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economy, all of which can be translated realistically as meaning that the rich will get richer, and the poor will get poorer. Undoubtedly many of the Tories would like to dismantle the welfare state, but daren't go very far without alienating their own supporters, since it is generally accepted that the middle class have got more out of the state welfare services than the working class, if only because they have a better understanding of what's due to them. Nevertheless, we can expect these ideologues to do a fair bit of whittling away on the grounds of saving public expenditure. And there is the inexplicable folly of resuming arms sales to South Africa, to which at the time of writing the government still seems committed. This appears to be the particular brain-child of the Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Hume, a politician who is now clearly past the peak of such intellectual powers as he can ever have laid claim to. The reaction to all this should ultimately stir up the prevalent torpor of English political life, and do something to revivify the left, which had become pretty demoralized under the Labour Government.

We are now told we can expect a long cold winter of strikes and fuel shortages, and, starting in February, the imponderables of decimalizing the currency, when the pound will consist of one hundred New Pence; this will be an advantage in the long run, but will take a bit of getting used to (though welcome news for tourists from countries with more rational currencies). Meanwhile, the Warwickshire lanes through which I drive to work are looking good as October draws on; the colours of the dying leaves growing richer each day. Elsewhere, rivers are becoming polluted with untreated sewage, and in parts of London uncollected garbage is piling up in the streets, because of a strike by low-paid municipal service workers, which has dragged on for weeks. The employers are being sternly encouraged to "stand firm" by Mr. Heath's government, which is against inflationary wage increases. Still, there's nowhere else to live.

—BERNARD BERGONZI

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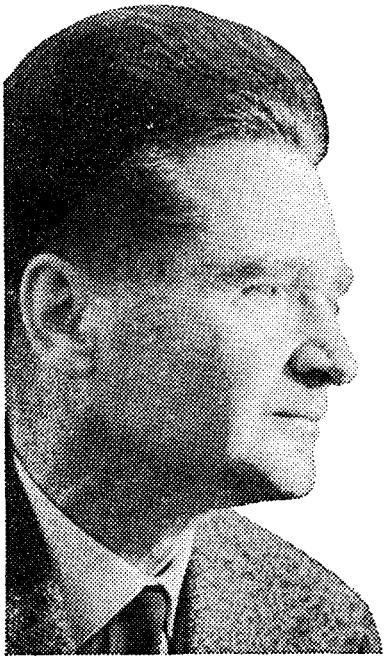
The Fall into Time

by E. M. Cioran



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LANCELOT LAW WHYTE

Towards a Science of Form

Dedicated to Herbert Read

> I term, then, that goodness that first comes to children "education."
> —Plato
>
> . . . it is no longer a question of moral exhortation or religious revivalism; it is a question of having faith in a few simple ideas, for only such simple ideas can transform the world.
> —Herbert Read

WE CANNOT YET IDENTIFY those simple ideas with any certainty. This essay merely expresses my personal conviction; it is my testament regarding the future.

Assume that mankind is near its darkest hour since it became aware of itself as an organic species, and that the worst of the crisis will shortly have passed. This is conceivable; history often surprises. Who will then be seen to have pointed to factors making for sanity? I believe that Herbert Read will be one. He usually called the main redeeming principle that he saw: "education through art"; but I am not disloyal to his thought if I express it as *sanity through the spontaneous esthetic imagination*. Or simply: health through the healing unconscious.

This is a revolutionary idea. It implies a transformation of the individual and of society, and its full implications are not easy to recognize, for it touches one of the characteristic blind spots of our time: we tend to regard the unconscious mind mainly as a source of trouble and underrate its power for good. A prophetic idea such as Read's cannot be socially valued at its true historical significance until the moment arrives when in a flash it comes into general awareness as obviously valid. In 1967 Read said that his simple idea "may still conquer the world."

I shall describe Read's idea as I see it and then link it with a similar idea of mine. My aim is to allow the two—if, indeed, they are two, not one—to be seen as aspects of a radical and still largely unconscious change in the condition of the human psyche which is already in progress. There is nothing irrational or biologically

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unlikely in such a change. It is an organic readjustment[1] from dissociation and relative disorder towards a more unified order of a historically novel kind, an adjustment of the same character as the unconscious healing processes of organisms.

Why do I take on myself to interpret Read? Because we share a message which arose as a response to identical experiences. There are many differences between a Yorkshire poet and an Edinburgh natural philosopher. But there is a parallel between certain features of Read's life and thought and of mine which is relevant here, because without this common experience in mind as a symbol of human failure in this century the thought of neither can be understood.

We were young Officers on the Western Front in the First World War, Read being three years my senior. Both were so affected that we were forced to conclude, like voiceless millions around us, that the moral and religious basis of Western society was inadequate and a fresh vision needed which might one day inspire a new civilization. It took long for the personal trauma in each to be in some degree repaired. Read was left with the sense, almost a conviction, that conflict was the ultimate condition of everything, and had to regain balance before he could discern a path to social recovery. I was in a state of confusion with no convictions and many years had to pass before new organizing ideas could take shape in me. Thus it came about that our most influential books, those in which we each offered a social diagnosis and a possible therapy, appeared twenty-five years after that trauma: Read's *Education through Art* in 1943 at 50, and my *The Next Development in Man* in 1944 at 48. The second World War had left no excuse for further delay; anyone who felt he had something to offer must do so.

Moreover our diagnoses and hopes were identical. Read saw "the secret of our collective ills (in) the suppression of spontaneous creative ability in the individual," and I traced the "con-

[1] Note the parallel with C. A. Reich's transformation of U. S. youth to "Consciousness III" in *The Greening of America* (*New Yorker*, Sept. 26, 1970 and Random House, Oct. 1970). Both are organic, not political or moral; they involve a change towards immediacy, spontaneity, feeling, imagination, and openness; and depend on a changed education. I would call both a *metamorphosis* (sudden change of organisation and form) leading to the reintegration of unconscious and conscious. This parallel is further evidence of the emerging consensus.

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flict between spontaneous and deliberate behaviour" to a "European dissociation" of instinct and intellect. Read called the factor which could redeem man the "spontaneous esthetic imagination"; I described it as the "formative faculty" guided by the unconscious coordinating processes of the brain-mind. Both recognized the crucial importance of biology for man's insight into his own nature in this century, and were influenced by Freud, Jung, D'Arcy Thompson, and Gestalt psychology. *Form* was a conception of great significance for both, as we were sustained by the belief that the only possible source of social health in a technological age was the esthetic, formative, and integrating power of the healthy spontaneous mind, in which conscious and unconscious aspects are inseparable.

Both sought to unify, but knew that the context of the world religions had vanished. It was necessary to look to something deeper than religion, art, or science in the narrower senses of specialized and separated modes of activity. That deeper factor was the imaginative faculty from which all culture has sprung. Thus one must look to a radical change in the organic-esthetic condition of the individual and of society, a change of heart and mind associated with a new awareness of and insight into nature and man and with a new social intention. To identify that possible change in mankind did not imply historical optimism; the rage of distorted men might end the story at any moment, as cancer may the individual life. Nor does that change imply moral progress, for it is a social adjustment to changed circumstances not to be understood as a long-term ethical "improvement." There is no miraculous millennium ahead, but adaptation to new human powers.

That was the shared experience and response. I only realized the extent of this common ground after Read's death and I want to share it. We need the sense of comradeship, not only in the trenches of war where Read found it, but in the perplexing task of living in this equally shocking "peace." When so bitter a wind is blowing, should we not form a consensus of goodwill? Hence this essay. It deals with matters essentially esthetic, but it touches issues lying so deep that they carry implications which may seem to be "ethical" or "religious," though not so in the traditional

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senses. I use the term "esthetic" for the spontaneous non-purposive response to beauty, harmony, or order in a partly random universe, and when I speak of the "spirit" of man I refer to the esthetic core of his mind.

*

The gist of Read's simple idea is that the most important human norms are derived originally from the visual perception of organic forms and grace of movement. These give the infant and child its unconscious standards of harmony and unity, and determine the formal basis of the arts which thus acquire a social importance. A sense for harmony, potential in human nature, is evoked and strengthened by the sight of organic nature around us, in so far as a commercial civilization still permits this. But "education," from birth to maturity, is not designed to develop this sense by the full use of art and so the child fails to grow into what by his hereditary constitution he is capable of becoming: an imaginative, integrated, and spontaneous adult personality, a human organism displaying a characteristic personal differentiation. To restore balance and to give the oncoming generations a fair chance education in the widest sense should cultivate the spontaneous creative imagination more, and the discursive analytical intellect, with its memory records and specialist techniques, relatively less.

"The aim of imaginative education" says Read, following Plato,

> is to give the individual a concrete sensuous awareness of the harmony and rhythm which enters into the constitution of all living bodies and plants, to the end that the child, in its life and activities, shall partake of the same organic grace and beauty. By means of such education we instil into the child that "instinct of relationship" which even before the advent of reason, enables it to distinguish the beautiful from the ugly, the good from the evil, the right pattern of behaviour from the wrong pattern, the noble person from the ignoble.

This is an idea the power of which cannot be appreciated by minds disillusioned by the failure of ancient ideals, for it demands a new enthusiasm. I see no other factor of equal potential power in the present situation. There is beauty, harmony, and order in living things and in the tradition of art, and this is what we mean by "form." If this were better understood, valued at its

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true worth, taught for its timely immediacy, and lived in the varied manners fitting to each community small and great, the world would be transformed. This is Read's grand idea. Its nobility speaks for itself. He is saying that insight into the forms of organic nature and of art can deepen man's insight into and development of his own potentialities for harmony. The links between art and life are deep and subtle. But our faith must be that the vision of the order of nature and of art can unconsciously strengthen order in man and restore innocence.

In the narrower sense of education through art the idea is old. Plato and Schiller expressed it in the context of their times, and many others, Aristotle, Comenius, and Goethe, for example, held somewhat similar views. But these do not concern us. For Read's passionate conviction is distinguished by several features from the ideas of earlier thinkers: his stress on the individual, his emphasis on the visual sense and arts, his organic outlook based on an awareness of the crucial role of the organic realm and of biology, and his sense of urgency, as though the achievements or failures of the rest of this century might determine the fate of mankind for long to come. Plato speaks for eternity, Read for our unhappy time:

> The primary facts . . . are not ethical at all, but merely animal . . . the education of the esthetic sensibility is of fundamental importance . . . [and] has for its only object the integration of all biologically useful activities in a single organic activity . . . [in art] two main principles are involved: a *principle of form,* derived in my opinion from the organic world, and the universal objective aspect of all works of art; and a *principle of origination* peculiar to the mind of man . . . we only possess this gift [of establishing images] and retain it in so far as we all, in our degree and capacity, are natures in immediate contact with the *growth and form* [my italics] of the visible world . . . [re D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form:*] this remarkable book . . . one of the classics of scientific literature . . . and a work of fundamental importance for the understanding of all the problems of natural philosophy, not excluding the nature and scope of art.

Read regarded the unconscious impression made on the infant and child by the organic realm as the primary source of the most important of all learning and conditioning, because it is prior to intellectual development: the growth of a sense for harmonious forms and activities. His emphasis on "growth and form" re-

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flected no passing fancy. He first expressed it in 1943. In 1951 he wrote: "Knowledge of form is the key to understanding not only in science but also in art. . . . Esthetics is no longer an isolated science of beauty; science can no longer neglect esthetic factors." Finally in 1968: "I believe that the most inspiring book an art teacher can read today is D'Arcy Thompson's *On Growth and Form*." He was continually calling attention to the need for what might be called morphological understanding, insight into form and its development, organic and artistic.

The existence of a single underlying basis, morphological and esthetic, of science and art was a commonplace to many thinkers from the Greeks, through Leonardo da Vinci and Goethe to others since, and in a new context it has recently become fashionable. It is now accepted that esthetic factors play an essential role in the working of the scientific imagination. But the social importance of this primary concern with order and form is still understood by few and the idea of basing a civilizing education on it remains revolutionary. Read will never be forgotten where the human mind is honoured for *he was the first influential thinker to proclaim the urgent social importance of a deeper understanding of form, organic and esthetic, and of its genesis.* Without this understanding man cannot understand his fate. Here the terms "organic" and "esthetic" fuse into a single principle of ordering or *coordination*. Read's outlook implies an esthetic and ethic of coordination. "Civilization is coordination." Growth and form result from the coordination of parts.

How can each contribute to the needed esthetic sanity? Read says: by nourishing the imagination "through openness to experience." It is a matter of negative capability, of relaxing and listening to the inner voice. There is no "God" giving us guidance from above; the enlightening intimations come "from below," from less conscious spontaneous movements of the mind. "All that we can do is to remain in a state of openness to experience." Some pessimists—such as Calvin and Freud—have regarded man's deepest nature, his unconscious mind, as a cauldron of evil awaiting opportunity. A more balanced judgment based on the experience of joy as well as pain—to say nothing of biological commonsense—suggests that in the long run more good than evil has come in the past, and will in the future, from whole-natured spontaneity. Read

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believed this; such disillusion as he suffered in his last years concerned recent tendencies in the arts, not his acceptance of life.

I have no doubt that Read's influence, though now relatively invisible, will ultimately prove great, for his insights meet an aspect of our greatest need and will form part of a wider movement, irresistible if disaster does not come first. But in the meantime Read's simple idea is frustrated by an awkward circumstance. The biology of man is not yet able to provide a valid conception of imaginative man. No evil genius could have devised a greater historical calamity. Image-making man in this hour of his great need, when traditional norms are no longer effective, has no adequate image of himself, and Read's idea floats in the air. This is my cue, and the emphasis now passes from growth and form to the coordination responsible for both.

*

"Form is never trivial or indifferent, it is the magic of the world" (Dalcq). For imaginative minds there is a magic about form beyond its esthetic appeal. Behind our conscious response to the elegance of a crystal, a flower, or an animal there lurks a challenge as though the beauty of such forms held a tantalising secret which stimulated our unconscious mind but eluded our awareness. This is indeed the case. The existence of regular spatial forms points to a human ignorance of the importance of which we are only slowly becoming aware: though forms are all-important and a deeper understanding of them must have rich results, only in a few simple cases do we yet know how they come into existence! There is as yet no accepted natural philosophy or comprehensive science of forms and formative processes. No one has yet uncovered this primary secret of nature: the genesis of spatial forms.

We do not even understand the story of our own genesis: how the tiny fertilized ova that were once all there was of you and me became you and me as we are today, functionally organized adults of human form. Though we spend our lives amidst forms and see little else, though at moments of insight we may become aware that growth and form cradle our lives and that our thoughts come to us from formative processes in our brain-minds, no influential scientist has yet posed this master question for man the creative

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organism: *Does one general law exist under which spatial forms are generated, and, if so, how far does this provide an analogy suggesting how the forms of the imagination and of thought emerge on the less conscious levels of the human mind?* This question is old to philosophy, but new to science.

Why is an understanding of forms and their genesis one of our greatest social needs? Because it should provide so compelling a biological image of the esthetic imagination that the world must willy-nilly take notice and improve its education, the stifling of a young imagination being then seen to be every whit as wicked as choking a baby. Now some good news. I shall show that, as Read hoped, a Science of Form is already emerging which must provide health-promoting insights and eventually a valid image of man.

Here we reach the kernel of my faith in a simple idea, and my conviction that it is timely. There are moments in intellectual history when a corner is turned and new vistas light up the human mind. As I see it, we are near to such a corner today: we are on the eve of understanding inorganic and organic forms. When such a far-reaching event of this kind is close at hand it must already have been long in preparation. It is not difficult to know what is in the air many years before the Newton, Darwin, or Freud achieves the authentic step and irrevocably changes man's situation. It has become my vocation in speaking to young humanist America to spread awareness of this coming dawn, and it is an essential feature of my theme that it is easy for non-specialists to understand. If I am right the worst of the ugly age of specialism is already over, and the day of a new immediacy at hand. Readers not prejudiced by over-specialized training should be able to follow and to welcome my suggestions more readily than those scientists whose minds have been harmfully narrowed by a long tradition of successful specialism. Such are the paradoxes of intellectual history which never repeats itself and is always surprising.

It is sometimes necessary to make explicit what is obvious. This world contains countless ordered or partly-ordered, regular or less regular, spatial units, from molecules, crystals, and organisms to solar system and spiral nebulae. This is obvious, and only slightly less so is the fact that the universe as a whole and every organism in it is a complex hierarchy of spatial units, a sequence of larger

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and smaller systems, a chain of wholes and parts on successive levels.

The great inorganic hierarchy and the myriads of hierarchically structured organisms are very different. But the prevalence of this type of spatial ordering is one of the most general characteristics of the universe and the least understood. For the units at each level in both must have a history and a time and manner of genesis, and the formation of any unit is often a step in the building up of a hierarchy. But no general law has yet been discovered showing how these units and hierarchies of units arise, under what circumstances, forces, and so on. Formative nature, Spinoza's *natura naturans,* is still a mystery. But we know enough to restate the first part of our master-question in the natural philosophy of forms: How and when did the units on the various levels of the structural hierarchies first come into existence? In 1900 A.D. no one dreamed of such a question; by 2000 A.D. scientists may know most of the answers.

Goethe had a useful rule: when faced with an intractable problem, turn it into a postulate. Let us provisionally regard form-genesis as too difficult for current physical theory and treat it as the main axiom of a future theory of forms. So we assert as a basic assumption, not itself requiring explanation but to be used in explaining other things, the existence of a class of processes in which spatial form is generated, to go beside the class of closed systems in which energy is conserved. We choose a scientific name for this important class of processes. "Formative" is too general and we must avoid the association of terms that have already been used, such as *facultas formatrix, Gestaltung, nisus formativus,* and morphogenesis. So we select a short, Greek, unspoilt, and scientific-sounding term: *morphic,* and call "morphic" all processes generating spatial form. "Morphic" is a modern name for the spatial expression of the tendency toward unity, order, and intelligibility which Plato recognized in nature. If "morphic" is as timely as I believe, it will shortly be as commonplace a concept as "atoms" or "conservation laws." Name-giving in science can be of value, if it calls attention to timely problems.

Now an interesting thing has happened in the physical sciences since around 1860. The advance of physics, with its associated sciences, has followed two divergent paths. The first is the progressive discovery, through a series of intellectual revolutions, of

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more comprehensive but increasingly abstract basic laws. This is the path of Maxwell, Einstein, and Quantum Mechanics. Knowledge is extended, but the mathematics gets more complex and further from ordinary visual space. This increasing abstractness and difficulty gives a paralyzing inferiority complex to those without mathematical training, and just when it is badly needed the voice of humanism is stilled. I believe that this tendency has reached a point where it must be reversed and that the next revolution in physics will be towards immediacy in visual space, and so welcome to humanists. But that is a personal opinion.

The other path is more congenial to non-specialists, and is laying the basis of a science of form. It consists in the cumulative identification of natural structures set in visual space. Here there are no revolutions; each identification, once fully checked, is final. I will mention some of these steps; they possess esthetic properties of order and symmetry of interest to everyone.

About 1860 the idea arose that chemical molecules possess characteristic structures in accordance with the manner in which the atoms are joined, like the symmetrical hexagon of the benzene molecule, and soon afterwards it became clear that many molecules are three-dimensional structures and need steric (3D) models. Thus stereo-chemistry, the first branch of the science of form and structure, came into being. There followed the remarkable proof on the simplest assumptions that there are 230 possible types of crystal (of the kinds then contemplated); the progressive identification of the structure of more complex molecules culminating recently in the structure of some of the giant biomolecules which operate as functional units in organisms (though we do not yet understand why globular proteins possess such a curious structure—oh! to be a young biophysicist today!); in 1953 the identification of the DNA helices of heredity; and during the 1960s the spread of the recognition that the inanimate universe and each organism is a complex hierarchy of levels of structure awaiting systematic study as a hierarchy (it would be exciting to be a young theoretician of hierarchies in 1970!). All these identifications, and many more, are definitive steps towards a new kind of science, a science of structure accounting for all the patterns in the universe, their formation and interactions.

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This is the century of structure and as we pass into its last third, research is moving from the study of stationary equilibrium structures to the processes by which they are formed and the changes they undergo. This is a fascinating new world of *ordered processes* and it will be marked by unexpected insights. I stake everything on this: *these insights will be startlingly simple and superbly elegant.* They will bring profound relief and joy to the human intellect.

To give some precision to this conviction which possesses me, here is a hint of the kind of new insight I anticipate, which may or may not be correct. All organic structural units are flexible and may *pulsate* as they perform their functions, simultaneously swelling and contracting and twisting and untwisting, so that after each cycle they come back to their original form, like the pulses of the heart. If so, to be "alive" is to pulsate, all life on this planet partakes in such pulsations, and of course we too. I have no doubt that the structured and hierarchical universe in which we spend our lives is rich with such powerful simplifying principles, now lying just round the corner out of sight.

This second line of advance, the identification of natural structures, is cumulative, convergent, and in some realms accelerating, like the final stages in a jig-saw puzzle if no error has been made. As I see it nothing but world disaster can prevent an astonishing advance during the next decades, establishing once and for all major chapters of the new science of form. To make this more specific consider one major possibility: the discovery of the character of *organic coordination,* of the coordinated spatial hierarchy of processes which constitutes life.

During the last few decades the electron microscope has brought within sight much of the working structure present in every living cell. This is a hierarchy of parts and wholes in visual space (*not* in abstract Minkowski-Einstein space-time). The atoms, polymers, enzymes, organelles, cells, tissues, and organs of every organism seem *prima facie* to be elegantly arranged in a complex hierarchical array "so that" the processes at the various levels cooperate to sustain the life-cycles of the organism. I cannot express the awe this holds for me. If one is only concerned with biochemical details, there is no cause for surprise. Equally if as a naturalist one is only concerned with the macroscopic life-cycles,

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one leaves the details to others. But organic nature knows neither bias. The miracle is precisely that complexity can form a unity, that the fantastically complex system of atomic movements and chemical actions are somehow coordinated to sustain the over-all processes which make up the life-cycles. Few scientists, alas, are as unbiassed as nature and are equally interested both in the complex atomic details and in the unifying organic coordination, though therein lies the true "secret of life." In 1970 this coordination is till a mystery, and it is perhaps the most challenging and far-reaching of all the problems yet encountered by exact science. What is the character of organic coordination, and how has it emerged and evolved on this planet?

In the inorganic realm there are processes which display high ordering and "collective" or "cooperative" properties, so that a complex system may sometimes behave as a unit. It seems that in the organic realm such cooperative properties and global processes are common and may dominate many regions, so long as the conditions are favourable to life. It is no empty assertion, but may well express the truth, that in this technical sense *life consists mainly of cooperative activities producing global results.* This is a speculative generalization to invite research.

Here a major issue arises on which, alas, countless scientists have prematurely taken sides, thus revealing personal prejudices not supported by "the authority of science" (a dangerous concept). There are the *mechanists,* who hold that the basic physical laws (though these are not yet known!) can cover all the properties of organisms, and the *vitalists,* who consider that some non-physical principle is needed to cover organic properties, (though organic coordination has not yet been identified!). The fundamental relation of physical to organic properties cannot be known by anyone until science possesses both (1) a fundamental, i.e. unified theory of physical variables, and (2) an acceptable identification of the precise character of organic coordination—neither of which is available today. Thus neither "mechanism" nor "vitalism" is a permissible scientific doctrine in 1970. To put it another way, we are still too ignorant on both sides to decide whether the axioms of a fundamental physics are logically rich enough to cover organic properties. But I believe the correct answer will be known in this century, and it will constitute one of the major theorems of the science of form.

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When this dual insight into fundamental physics and organic coordination is attained it will mark a stage in the advance of human understanding worthy to stand beside the achievements of Galileo and Kepler. For it will mean that the elegance of organic growth and form, to which Read ascribed man's sense of harmony, will be extended and enriched by a new dimension, that of internal structure. This discovery of organic structural elegance and its laws will mark a great moment for the human intellect. Moreover to anticipate it now eases the task of those who will make the discoveries.

The greatest ideas can be simply expressed. So here is my attempt. The new understanding will be that *atoms cooperate to create organic elegance* (when the conditions necessary for the emergence, sustaining and evolution of organisms are present). In this simple thought two Greek ideas are united: Greek atomism and Greek harmony. Will not every sober man then ask himself: Can we not achieve the cooperation shown by blind atoms?

However in this diagnosis of the position of the developing science of form there is a puzzle. How has it been possible for knowledge of inorganic and organic structure to have advanced to the present point without scientists stumbling onto the morphic laws governing the formation of structural units and hierarchies? The answer illuminates the psychology of scientific communities. It seems that it is impossible for any group of scientists to pay adequate attention to two opposite effects at the same time, for example to two opposed tendencies in physical processes. During the century 1860-1960 the attention of physicists studying tendencies was given to one great tendency towards dynamical disorder (heat processes under the entropy principle) and in the minds representative of the period this inhibited attention to an opposite trend equally worthy of study: the tendency towards spatial order, as in the formation of molecules, crystals, and all other ordered units, inorganic or organic. These are the processes I have called morphic.

Sensitive minds have been troubled by this century-old bias. Henry Adams protested fifty years ago that influential scientific minds seemed to believe that "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man." This was a fair description of an unbalanced physics. Is a crystal or an organism chaotic? Is not

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man, with his dreams of order, part of organic nature? Fortunately, as we have seen, there are signs that physics is now developing a more balanced view of ordering as well as disordering processes.

In the meantime humanists, artists, and teachers urgently need a working philosophy of morphic processes, and an image of morphic man even, if need be, in advance of science. Yet there is still a prejudice, conscious or not, against the morphological way of thinking in many university scientific departments, even of biology. One hears the admonition of naively confident specialists: "Atomism, micro-analysis, and the statistics of random processes, have paid off. Do not desert the methods which have enabled exact science to overcome superstition. To indulge in speculative morphology is to betray exact science." As this attitude has been dominant until recently it is not surprising that even after decades of research into organic morphogenesis, the development of a fertilized ovum into a functional adult organism is not yet understood. In the process of differentiative growth each part seems to know where it is and what it has to do. But how? This form- and function-generating process awaits minds capable of combining local atomic precision with global morphological principles, for here the hierarchical unity of the whole must be understood as well as the atomic processes into which it can be decomposed. It is useless to try to understand any general properties of organisms without thinking in terms of coordinated pulsating hierarchies, if that is what organisms are.

But is there not a vast gap between our knowledge of a few static structures and a biological conception of the esthetic imagination? All the interests of technical specialisation in the universities, the factories, the board-rooms, and even the schools, are arrayed against Read's policy for man. Have we to wait for generations for an image of imaginative man so compelling that no community will dare not to reform its education?

The position is not as bad as it may seem. First, there must be a continuity between animal morphogenesis and formative thinking. Both develop hierarchical patterns of functional activity, and the scientist assumes an unbroken sequence of processes linking embryological and neural development with the brain-mind processes of the adult. Organic and mental morphogenesis

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must form one continuity. It is possible, therefore, that embryology will shortly come to the aid of the psychology of the imagination.

Moreover, this is part of a more comprehensive continuity. I never forget Henry Drummond's "Law of Continuity" or "Law of Laws," that if nature be a harmony there must exist a unity and continuity extending through all realms, which for me means the physical, organic, esthetic, and mental. The productive scientist, however down-to-earth he may think himself, shares with the mystic a passionate, non-rational but not irrational, belief in the existence of a unity throughout and in the possibility of finding aspects of it, though the bliss of that discovery cannot be assured in advance. Indeed in this dedication to and experience of an ordering unity all imaginative minds are one.

At a humbler level all human (non-pathological) activities reflect the organic coordinating tendency. We see this tendency at the human level in the creation of unions of contrasts: sexual, esthetic, intellectual and social. It is part of the natural religion which we need, to live supported by the (today still pre-scientific) conviction that all healthy men, and women, and children, in some degree share this universal, partly unconscious, ordering and unifying passion. In the twentieth century A.D. man has reached the stage of awareness when the individual can recognize in himself this organic-human *nisus* and therefore call the species to which he belongs man the spontaneous coordinator, *man the unifier*. Drummond's continuity, the feature common to all four realms, is the morphic tendency in the universe which in healthy brain-minds becomes the emotional and intellectual drive to create unities.

At an historical transition such as this, when human awareness is reaching out further than ever before, it is as well not to exaggerate the novelty of the vistas opening before us. I have stressed the basic unity of the morphic processes of nature and the imaginative, plastic powers of the human mind. This analogy is far from new. In a restricted sense the Greeks saw it, but that was before man separated his awareness of himself from his perception of nature around him. A hundred and fifty years ago Schelling argued that one organizing principle pervades the

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physical world and human consciousness. This ordering principle, which underlies all productivity, operates without awareness in external nature and with partial awareness in our minds. I find it hard to believe that this will not be evident to all scientists within a decade or two. But in the 1960's this was not yet clear to the majority of parents or educators and as a consequence the power for good of unconscious and semiconscious mental processes has still to be fully exploited as the main therapeutic factor which can guide the transition to a new social order. If there were a "God" and he offered me one wish for mankind I would ask that men and women everywhere should accept the power for good of their whole-natured spontaneity, and their children's.

It is difficult for partly-conscious man, absurdly proud of his awareness and of what he still believes to be its achievements, to admit that the genius of man lies in the less conscious operations of his brain-mind. Its energy is invisible, but its fruits are seen. The old and the mis-educated may be beyond hope, but can any younger mind doubt that all the great cultural achievements since man first spoke to man came from human spontaneity, from an origin without consideration or purpose, guided by an élan to which neither "unconscious" nor "conscious" applies? Here science is silent, for we have as yet no glimmer of understanding of what happens during the intercourse of two minds when unthought thoughts flow into unchosen words, when spontaneity speaks.

Let us face it. If we are honest with ourselves we know that "God" speaks—if at all—through intimations from the unconscious. All that is noble in man, all truth, beauty, and goodness in human nature, have their source there. Any life in my words comes from a vitality beneath my self-awareness. Any work is the greater, not only in art, but in all realms, the more it comes from the unconscious and the less from deliberate intention. This recognition of the role of the less conscious mind does not involve surrender to irrationality, but the reverse; it makes unconscious organizing processes the organic foundation of human reason and the source of all creativity and invention.

Take the genesis of language, the supreme achievement and perhaps the best criterion by which to mark our species. Can there be any doubt that the development of language was—as a

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sequence of German thinkers around 1840-70, such as Schelling and von Hartmann, suggested—a creation of unconscious factors, an achievement in which an innate hereditary capacity, emerging —as we now know—through an evolutionary process, was brought to fruition in *homo sapiens* by individual and group spontaneity without deliberate conscious intention?

Since thought is born of failure, and thought takes time and may require long preparation, there is a considerable time-lag between a major human failure and recovery by thought, and this delay is one reason for the intensity of our distress. *Homo sapiens* in Europe became introspective, and began in a vague way to realize the importance of unconscious mental processes between 1700 and 1900, and thus far all was well, a balanced conception of the unconscious prevailed, though few paid attention to it. But professional minds were first drawn to pay systematic attention to the unconscious mind through its pathology, just as the realization of the crucial role of organic coordination in man and all organisms, is today being forced on biologists and doctors by its breakdown in cancer. Close attention is only drawn to any widespread factor when it fails to produce its normal results, and a sensible society would make allowance for this tendency towards bias in certain applications of scientific method: normal or pervasive aspects are often recognized only some time after anomalous ones.

But so wise we are not. Thus when Freud made himself the first genius of the unconscious, neither he nor any social watchdog pointed out, so that the world could benefit by the warning, that Freud's unconscious is merely the pathological variant of an organic norm in general healthier. Freud passed from the diagnosis of hysteria in women (where one assumes his insight was superb, though at one endearing moment he confessed he did not understand the development of sexuality in women) to despair at the sadisms of western civilization. The Freudian unconscious *is* blind, cruel, and destructive, but this is not the whole story or the species would never have created cultures. The healthy unconscious is the source not only of all good, but of the very idea and the valuation of "good" and "God." It is for the morphic science of tomorrow to trace the continuity which runs through the morphogenetic processes of embryolog-

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ical development and the self-organizing operations of the emerging nervous system and brain-mind, to the formative activities of imaginative thinking at all levels from which all good things have sprung.

In the meantime Freud's pessimism regarding the future of our civilization appears well justified. Our century is, relatively to the newly discovered human powers, dark with failure, violence, and repudiation of the tradition which many consider to be our only asset. Pessimism is easy. But optimism and pessimism are both irrelevant, it is the possible that we need to identify.

For me there are signs that the end of the age of Anti-man may be close, the age when man turned on himself in rage at having ever accepted earlier noble aspirations that had so miserably failed, and revelled in self-abuse. In his bitterness at the idealisms which had failed him Anti-man welcomed any image that denied his humane humanity, images whose temporary prevalence future historians will find it hard to understand, they are so partial, so biased, and so unbiological. Thus some have found acceptable as images of themselves conceptions as strange as existentialist self-pitying sub-man forgetting his capacities for joy and for creation, or man as uncoordinated biochemistry, or as a computer without a programme, or most widespread and more understandable, man as a mutation that failed, to be brought shortly to an end by a cataclysm of self-destruction, a result doubtless unconsciously planned by the engineers of death. It is insufficiently understood that current violence, from wars to street brawls, is historically and organically inevitable: Anti-man must rejoice in violence as the easiest anodyne for unbearable despair.

Note that the young are not only pursuing violence, historically reasonable though merely evil to those who are too comfortable to share the world's despair, but also the exploration of the human potentialities for experience to their furthest limits in sexual experiment, in drugs, in new communities, in science fiction, and in excursions to the moon. This is all—violence and experiment —easy to understand. Indeed if regarded as the prelude to a new culture no better preparation could be designed. The role of youth is to shake the old order to its roots; only then can the new ideas be received and implemented. They will doubtless come from many, of whom Read is one.

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Science is not the answer, and the science of form will be a catalyst but not a determinant of what is to be created, just as human consciousness is never alone decisive. In interpreting our historical situation we are still frustrated by what I regard as the gravest error the human mind has made in its so-called "advance," not from darkness but from superb animal coordination towards, we must hope, an equivalent human variant. We still think, or act as if we thought, that man can be true to himself or save himself only through deliberately selected, consciously willed activities. I have learnt that this is false. What is not whole-natured and spontaneous is nearly always ineffective or damaging. No steps that any human group takes today (to save mankind) can possess any efficacy unless the deeper organic factors in man are now, *and have already for long been,* working towards a universal organic and human social order. Consciousness certainly has a task today, but it is primarily negative: to release human imaginative spontaneity from false interpretations and mistaken restrictions. This is the heart of Read's message.

The present human situation is not to be viewed against eternity; it is a matter of this century. Unless the organic tendency toward coordination which is dominant in all viable species has already, say since 1914, been operating in the less conscious levels of millions, preparing the ground for a radical transformation of the human psyche from the outdated parochial condition of the past towards a universal organic way of thinking and living —unless this preparation has already been carried far enough, we are doomed.

Meantime the spirit-destroying complex—military, industrial, technetronic, and educational—moves toward disasters further prejudicing the dignity of the person and the remnants of world peace and world resources. It is possible that a long-prepared revolt against inhumanity will bring about in the remaining decades of this century one of those seemingly sudden social transformations which are a commonplace of the past and evidence the workings of the unconscious in history. We cannot calculate or guess the "chances" of a favourable outcome, for "probabilities" do not apply to history. What matters for each is the sole self-justifying value: unifying esthetic spontaneity based on open-ness to experience. This subsumes all other authen-

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tic values, past and future, and here the science of biology makes contact with the unconscious wisdom of the person.

What was previously seen as "growth and form" is now identified as "coordination of units," and man recovers his self-respect and sees himself as the apex of his universe, the individual aware of himself as the supreme spontaneous coordinator, unique in the known. If Read's revolution of the esthetic imagination comes about it will be as one aspect of the organic transformation here briefly described. All non-pathological men and women must desire this and dread the alternative which is clearly visible ahead: totalitarian technocratic coordination as a prelude to the species suicide now being prepared by the engineers of death. No twentieth-century thinker known to me has understood this better than Herbert Read, and it is with his emphasis on the individual and his person in mind that my last sentence is written. The new science of form will reveal as never before the elegance of the universe, but it will possess no authority to tell mankind, or any group or individual, what forms it shall make its own.

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WENDELL BERRY

The Unforeseen Wilderness

THAT THE WORLD IS STABLE and its order fixed is perhaps the most persistent human delusion. How many errors have been made on the assumption that what was *is*? To a young child the house he lives in is permanent and unchanging, an eternal verity. But it is clear to the man who keeps the house that if it is treated as an eternal verity it will soon perish altogether. Against the constant jeopardy of decay there is the necessity of constant renewal. And there are, of course, the maxims to the effect that you cannot go home again, or step into the same river twice.

I knew all that as well, I suppose, as any other man of my age. But as soon as I was confronted with the new experience of the Red River Gorge I immediately fell into the old error, assuming that the place partook of the nature of its maps—that, for instance, from what I knew I could predict what I would learn, or that my experience could be made to go according to a plan. Like a good engineer, I wanted to foresee what I was going to do and then do it.

But perhaps the first lesson we have to learn, or re-learn, from a wilderness is that the creation does not live and change according to a plan, but by freely accommodating what happens to it. The wild creatures do not go to some appointed place such as a kitchen or a restaurant to eat, but eat what they find where they find it. The bends and bars and pools of the river are not foreordained, but are made in response to obstructions and openings.

To a river, as to any unfettered natural force, an obstruction is merely an opportunity. For the river's nature is to flow; it is not just spatial in dimension, but temporal as well. All things must yield to the impulse of the water *in time,* if not today then tomorrow or in a thousand years. If its way is obstructed then it goes around the obstruction or under it or over it and, flowing past it, wears it away. Men may dam it and say that they have made a lake, but it will still be a river. It will keep its nature and bide its time, like a caged wild animal alert for the slightest opening. In time it will have its way; the dam like the ancient cliffs will be carried away piecemeal in the currents.

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The engineer's assumption that the nature of a place is fixed and can be altered according to plan is an illusion, as has been too often proven when planned "improvements" have produced wholly unforeseen disasters. But the engineer's illusion, in our time, is an illusion backed by enormous powers of technology and politics and wealth, and an illusion so empowered preserves itself by becoming an institution. It has a much longer life than the illusions of persons, and before it dies it may do, and usually does, long-term damage. The engineering illusion has produced damage, as in the strip mines of Eastern Kentucky, that will require a geologic era to correct.

To a modern engineer, entering a landscape with bulldozers, power shovels, dynamite and the other tools of his trade, the blueprint must seem as absolute as the will of God. A kindred, if smaller, illusion brought the pioneer plowman onto the steep slopes: the manifest destiny of a plowman was to plow; the tool, the human possibility, was the point of reference, not the nature of the place. When the dam has silted up and a valley is destroyed for the foreseeable future, or when the plowed-up top soil has washed away and the water shed is ruined, it is too late. The plans have been undone by natural processes that were not foreseen or taken into account. But it is the business of natural processes to produce consequences, and the first law of ecology is that justice is *always* done—though not necessarily to those who deserve it. Ecological justice, in fact, falls most often on later generations, or on the people who live downwind or downstream.

But the man who goes into the wilderness on foot, stripped of all the devices of the illusion of fixed order, finds his assumptions to be much shorter lived. Afoot, cut off from the powers by which men change things, he has made himself vulnerable to change. Whether he intends it or not, the wilderness receives him as a student. And what it begins to teach him is how to live beyond his expectations; if he returns often and stays long perhaps it will teach him to live *without* expectations. It will teach him the wisdom of taking no thought for the morrow—not because taking thought is a bad idea, but because it is not really possible; he doesn't know what thought tomorrow will require.

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The lessons are everywhere. He can't avoid them. They are innate in the experience. The weather and the mood of the woods have changed since his last trip. The stepping stones on which he crossed the creek a month ago are now washed away. The pebbles and small stones of the stream bed have moved and changed, and in their changing he feels the changing of the boulders and the cliffs. If the weather on his last trip was so pleasant as to have stayed in his mind, an enticement to come back, he may be discouraged this trip to have to contend with sweltering heat, or with a cold rain. But the elusive ovenbird, that he sort of expected never to see, suddenly appears on a low limb beside the path. Or a pair of grouse erupt into flight almost under his feet, causing his heart to jump out of place—and for the next hundred yards he walks unconsciously on tiptoe, scarcely breathing, alert to what is around him as he has rarely been. Or a turn in the path shows him suddenly a rare flame azalea in bloom. What he planned is not happening, as if by some natural law. He is finding the *life* of the time, the challenges and delights, in what he did not foresee.

No place is to be learned like a textbook or a course in school, and then turned away from forever on the assumption that one's knowledge of it is complete. What is to be known about it is without limit, and it is endlessly changing. Knowing it is therefore like breathing: it can happen, it stays real, only on the condition that it *continue* to happen. As soon as it is recognized that a river—or, for that matter, a home—is not a place but a process, not a fact but an event, there ought to come an immense relief: one can step into the same river twice, one can go home again.

We had spent a hot hard July afternoon tramping in the Gorge in search of a place we had heard about, and we had failed to find it. The foliage closed in around us like a heavy fog, and we were drenched with sweat and with rainwater from an earlier shower that clung all that humid afternoon to the leaves. From the standpoint of our expectations the afternoon was a total loss, better forgotten. Except that in the midst of that failed search we *happened* on something unforgettable: a little dell in the woods where several streams met, making a pattern like a chicken track. The air opened and grew spacious under great hemlocks and beeches;

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shafts of sunlight slanted in as thick as the tree trunks; we rested there, and found cool water to drink. It is printed on my memory, a sort of blessing, by the force of its unexpectedness. Though our search failed in its intention, it succeeded in one of its accidents.

One Memorial Day—or as it turned out, one Memorable Day—I started out to canoe the Upper Gorge by myself, putting in below the bridge where Highway 746 crosses the Red. I had previously been down only a little below the mouth of Stillwater Creek, and so I had no idea what I was undertaking.

The river was high, the water about the depth of a paddle blade over the riffles. For a while I went down fast and easy. The current was strong even in the pools, and I was getting what I thought to be a free ride.

I had the river all to myself. As I went down wood ducks rose off the water ahead of me and flew downstream. I saw several water thrushes. I found a phoebe's nest with four fledged young on an overhanging rock face about a foot above the water.

And then I came to the first big rapid about a mile below Stillwater. There the river broke, falling steeply, through a narrow opening between two huge rocks, and above the rocks the slopes rose almost vertically, thickly covered with trees and undergrowth. I tied up first on one side of the river and then the other, and took a long look around.

The uproar of the rapid filled and beat inside my head, seeming to accumulate; I was rapidly becoming unable, as the saying is, to hear myself think. It was as though I had been brought suddenly, ignorant of the proper etiquette, into the presence of a grand and austere personage who had taken my life into his hands. I was losing my confidence and poise. The river was defeating me, and what is more it was making me glad to accept defeat. This rapid was bad, and I knew that it promised worse. I no longer had the faintest shadow of a wish to go any farther. And yet my pride held on to my intentions a while longer, and I carefully considered every possibility of getting through.

After much looking and pondering and looking back I was happy to conclude that there were no arguments at all in favor of going on. Running the rapid seemed a stupid risk for one man,

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and a portage looked about equally impossible. There was nothing to do but turn around and go out the way I had come in. It took me nearly four hours to make it back to my starting place, wading and pulling the canoe against the swift current. At times the water became too deep to wade, and I would have to swim across, or drift back downstream to where I could wade across. It was something of an ordeal, and I knew at the time that I was in considerable danger: in water like that, plunging under and around big rocks and sunken trees, there are any number of ways to drown.

But the real austerity of the Upper Gorge, and the extremity of my misjudgment in attempting it alone, didn't dawn on me until some weeks later. Mr. Wendell Nickell of West Liberty had taken me down the cliff to the Dog Drowning Hole, perhaps two miles below the rapid where I had turned back on my canoe trip. There had been rain and again the river was swollen; we could hear its clamor while we were still high up on the face of the cliff. When we finally worked our way down to the edge of it we were submerged in its sound. Its great noise, the voice of the whole stream, was so disproportionate to anything we could *see* that, within it, the river seemed to churn past us in silence. It drove down onto the comb of the rocks and was torn apart, buried in white froth, and then it gathered back into the single strand of itself, to be torn apart again.

Dog Drowning Hole indeed! The thought of drowning was native there. One could hardly look at it without knowing how it could tread down the head of a swimmer and hold it, while the great voice drumming there between the cliffs would go on, exuberant and oblivious, unchanged. It was a tenuous margin we stood on, the wall of the Gorge at our backs, and at our feet the let-loose tromping and churning of the Dog Drowning Hole.

And then while we stood there watching, my guide said very casually: "If three men were down in here, and one broke his leg, the other two couldn't carry him out."

I suppose that until somebody has tried it we won't know for sure about that—but I saw his point. As though his words had nudged me finally beyond the frontier of my ignorance, the reality

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of the Gorge suddenly stood up in all my nerves, and I realized what an edge I had come to on my canoe trip. When I pushed off that morning I passed ahead of my intentions as a driver speeding at night will overdrive his lights. If I had somehow contrived to go on past the rapid where I had turned back, I would have passed beyond what I could imagine, there would have been no foreseeing what might have happened. Before, the Gorge had been a place I understood somewhat as I understood its maps. But now it became a presence that I felt in the roots of my hair and the pit of my stomach, as though something whose very existence I had failed to anticipate had come up behind me in the dark and touched the back of my neck.

One way to see the Red River is by canoe. That way one sees it from the perspective of water, having made common cause with it, to be carried by it. Drifting, there comes an intimate sense of how the water has sought its way through the country, and one feels how simple and steadfast is its obedience to the law of gravity, filling and flowing on.

Another way is by foot. Step into the river at the bridge on highway 746 and wade down through the Gorge to the bridge on highway 715. You wade because the slopes on either shore are so steep and so thickly overgrown that the best walkway is obviously the bed of the river. And the perspective of the walker is as radically different from that of the boatman as it is from that of the stander on the bank. Walking, you have not merely entered the water; you have entered the course of the stream. You are experiencing not the stream alone nor the land alone, but the contending of the two by which each has been shaped. You are encountering by touch as well as by sight the water of the river and the obstacles it makes its way through or over or under or around. You have put your body into it like a gauge to measure the variations of its depth and the changes of its flow.

There are certain personal considerations to be dealt with at first. You are necessarily wet to the waist from the start, and you know you are *going* to be wet to the waist for hours on end. And there is the strangeness of walking over a surface that you can feel but cannot see; in spite of the use of a walking stick, the most

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reliable device for detecting submerged boulders and logs turns out to be your shinbone. As soon as these are accepted as normal circumstances you can give your attention to the adventure. And it *is* an adventure. One of the best.

Canoeing down a flowing stream, no matter in what mood it is done, never quite escapes the impulse of the current. Loitering or stopping, you nevertheless remain answerable to the movement of the water, the necessity to be going on. But walking down the Red, through the roughs of the Upper Gorge, has nothing in common with flowing; the current when it becomes swift enough to be noticeable is not an asset but a difficulty. Walking is slow and considering and deliberate. There is no building in its momentum. Where the canoeist could stop only with some forethought and considerable effort, where he would find it simpler and easier to go on, the walker always finds it easier to stop.

And so walking down through the Upper Gorge, we no sooner become involved in our trip, than we become equally involved in its side trips and diversions. We find phoebes' nests on the rocks—two that are empty, one with two eggs. When we stop and listen we hear warblers singing everywhere. We linger over the rock gardens along the shores, examining their growth of lichens and mosses and liverworts, violets and bluets and rue. The laurel bushes that here and there overhang the banks are in bloom. Once we see a frog clinging to a rockface like a little patch of lichen. On the bed of the river in the shallows we see fish's nests of heaped up pebbles.

We shed our packs at the mouth of one of the smaller tributary streams and, feeling light and quick-footed without our loads, pass back into the valley wall. The branch enters the river through a deep narrow cut beneath overhanging ledges and the close foliage of rhododendron—a kind of burrow that leads us back and up over preliminary steps in the rock ledges. And then the foliage opens overhead and withdraws on either side. It is a little as though we have emerged on the bottom of a well, but the space is broad and lofty, the proportions those of a great temple. In front of us there is a series of narrow ledges, divided by sheer high falls of the rock. From the top ledge, high up against the sky, a little

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stream leaps and slides, glittering and spattering, until finally it is gathered again into the tidy stream at our feet. The ledges are all covered and hung with flowers and mosses and ferns. On the other sides of the opening the forest rises tall and densely green. It is the wildest of places, the long casual violence of its making still potent in it. And yet it is pleasing in the way that the greatest architecture is pleasing, as though its shape and its proportions were the result of superb calculation. We stand in its shade and its looming gentle quiet, and look. And then we re-enter the stream's dark burrow.

And trash. We see plenty of trash—old tires, buckets and bottles and cans, the various plastic conveniences of our disposable civilization, leftovers of what Edward Abbey calls the world's "grossest national product." We see trash that has floated down out of upriver dumps, and trash that has been carried in by campers who would no doubt have got equal enjoyment if they had pitched their tents in the parking lot of a drive-in restaurant. Farther down, where the river begins to be accompanied by foot trails, we will see piles of excrement that might be mistaken for the sign of some large wild animal were they not surrounded by lavish blossoms of pink toilet paper.

To be ashamed of one's species is a strange and sickening emotion. It goes against the deepest instincts of kinship and self-regard. And yet it is an emotion that I—and I think a great many others—have to contend with more and more often. When I think of the near-perfection of industrial and recreational pollution, of the near-universality of armed hatred and prejudice, of our scientists' ecstatic dance in the light of the first atomic explosion, of the utter destruction of land for its timber or coal—then I feel such a heavy disgust that I look at the so-called lower animals with envy. I would gladly give up several of the larger benefits of "Progress" for the assurance that none of my kind had ever subjugated another people or destroyed a mountain or a watershed or napalmed a child. When I look at these lower animals and consider that not one of them ever destroyed its own habitat, or poisoned its own food and water, I am astonished at the claims we make for the "higher" human intelligence. The lowest animal, at present, is man.

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I would try to get rid of such emotions if I did not recognize their truth. In these times they are a part of the responsibility of an honest person. I believe that I would be a dangerous man if I did *not* feel them.

The evil that has produced what we now call "the environmental crisis" is arrogance or, to use the ancient Greek term that is more accurate, *hubris,* the assumption by men of divine prerogatives. It is the willingness to use more power than one can control. It is the *ignorant* use of power. It is a sin of which the consequences are invariably visited upon the descendants of the sinner, as the Greek myths and tragedies tell us over and over again. It is the reason why humility and modesty and self-restraint and temperance have been recognized as essential virtues through all of human history. The man who assumes and uses the powers of the gods must in his ignorance inevitably reduce the common fund of life and fortune on which his children will have to live.

The cure for *hubris* is an exact understanding of what are the powers and prerogatives of a *man.* Men who become too powerful and too proud, too arrogant in their use of the world, are beaten down, reduced to mansize, driven back into their proper estate. That is a divine—or, if you would prefer, a natural—law. It is one of the major subjects of *The Odyssey:* Odysseus, for his offense against Poseidon, is stripped of everything—homeland and rank and followers and weapons and clothes—and made to contend naked against the sea, not as a king but as a man, inferior to the gods and therefore dependent upon them. In the same way, as John Stewart Collis shows in his excellent book *The Triumph of the Tree,* nations of people who destroy the forests that protect the steep slopes and safeguard the health of watersheds, destroy at the same time the sources of their life, and eventually famine drives them out at large into the world. Perhaps the cutters of the trees do not themselves suffer for what they have done. Perhaps they prosper and their work seems productive only of wealth. But they have nevertheless prepared a justice which descends to their children like a congenital disease.

We have entered the environmental crisis with an arrogance and an overweening power that are without precedent, just as

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the envisionable catastrophes are without precedent. We are no longer faced with the loss of a kingdom or the conversion of fertile cropland into desert. Now we face cosmic disaster: the extinction of human life, and of all other life associated with it. For it may be that our species has now implemented its power and pride on such a scale, swelled so far out of its proper place in the ecological order that it can be forced back into its true limits—the limits of creatures and mortals—only by its destruction.

There is another kind of trial.

There are the trials imposed by the gods or by natural forces on men who have unwittingly deserved them, usually by forgetting that they live in a wilderness universe in which consequences are unforeseeable, and in which humility is therefore the first virtue. But there are also trials that are assumed wittingly, and perhaps by these assumed trials one may hope to avoid the harsher trials that are imposed.

A man may cast himself off from the comforts and securities of civilization as he knows it and enter the wilderness, taking with him only what he can carry on his back. He may begin with plans, but as soon as he leaves the roads and the beaten paths he is perforce contending at every step with the unforseen. He may have come for fun, and he may in fact take from the experience an intense pleasure, but he is nevertheless being tried. He is forced to live within his own personal limits, for he has left behind the machines and the devices that amplify his power. In the wilderness he can go only so far as his own legs will carry him, he can take with him only as large a load as his own back will bear. He finds that he has a smaller place and a smaller part to play in creation than he thought, but he finds—and this is his reward—that they are large enough. He should discover, at the very least, that a man who has a body and five senses to amuse himself with has little need for the machinery of recreation. The time he stays in the wilderness is a time spent in touch with a non-human world that is mysterious to him. From the flowers to the stars he sees little or nothing that men have made. He spends that time not as a master of the world but as a dweller in it—which is, after all, his true condition. And he should emerge from his experience somewhat

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changed—less eager to cash in on his birthright, aware that men are *part* of what they destroyed.

Certain Indians youths, when they were ready to enter into the estate of manhood, would undergo willingly and wittingly a man-imposed trial, and they did this for the express purpose of avoiding those trials that are imposed by the gods or by nature. My authority here is Clark Wissler's *Indians of the United States.* When the Indian youth "seeks wisdom and light," Wissler says,

> he goes out alone and, deep in the presence of nature, opens his mind and heart. He may fast and even tear his flesh, crying out, "Oh, pity me! Oh, pity me!"—believing that the unseen powers are human and that they may be moved to grant him security and power . . . after fasting and torturing himself for a long time, a man . . . may hear a voice, and in the darkness a shape may appear. It may be an animal, a bird or even a tree, but eventually it becomes a human being, addressing the supplicant with an enquiry as to why he is crying there. If his request is granted, instructions are given the supplicant, songs are taught him and certain injunctions laid upon him. The grant of power may be immunity from disease or from injury in war, or power to heal the sick. Such powers are usually specific and not general.
>
> . . . A bond or pledge is made by which the individual in question is linked to a particular unseen power . . . upon whom he may call in case of need. The song and the formula are passwords, so to speak, which reach the ear of the unseen. If the vision were that of a bear which spoke as a man, then that animal becomes the symbol of power, and the fortunate recipient may carry about with him an image of a bear, a claw, bone or piece of skin.

Whereas our society is discordant both within itself and within the natural environment, the Indian societies were for the most part harmonious within themselves and within nature. And it seems to me that one of the keys to that harmony, and undoubtedly one of its sources, was this initiatory trial by which, in order to become a man, a youth went alone into the wilderness to discover by going without it for a time the meaning of his society, to discover in humility his own smallness in the world of nature and his dependence on it, and to bring back finally some mark, which he would bear through life, of his unity with that larger world, some password by which to reach "the ear of the unseen." One

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became a man, that is, not by becoming presumptuous and proud in the use of human powers as is the tendency with us, but by the recognition and acceptance of one's human limits, by acknowledging one's dependence on powers beyond human reach.

I think that defines even for us—or *especially* for us—the usefulness and the necessity of the wilderness. Cut off from the wilderness, confined strictly to our cities and highways and croplands where we may persuade ourselves to feel safe in the illusion of human dominion, where will we go to learn to be as humble as we need to be? Without the wilderness to teach us, without the willingness to go and learn what it alone has the power to teach, we can only become more dangerous to the world and to ourselves.

What would it be like to experience the Red River unspoiled by men's abuse and refuse? Perhaps those of us living now will never know. Perhaps we may learn from our errors, in time, and become civilized enough to preserve and care for such places. Perhaps that is an exceedingly small possibility. At any rate, now the traveler in the Gorge will find that to get his experience of it pure he must be continuously editing out the most damning evidence against his species. It is a modern hardship.

And there is an ancient hardship. As motorists we are accustomed to journeys that occur in different places but not in different conditions. A man might drive his car across the Salt Lake Desert and then across Salt Lake City, and the condition of both trips would be that of the automobile; what his predecessors in covered wagons knew of the desert and of the desert condition is simply lost to him. Going afoot through the upper gorge, we have reverted to an ancient mode and mentality of travel. We are experiencing the place as a condition. And as the day goes on that condition gets livelier and more assertive. We become weary, the packs heavy, the footwork more and more burdened by the water and the hidden obstacles of the river. We begin looking for a campsite.

Perhaps there are places in the world where Nature has provided comfortable campsites a day's walk apart. In the Red River Gorge Nature had her mind on other work. It is a long time, and a long way, after we have decided to stop before we finally come to

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a stopping place. But there is a compensation, a sort of justice, operative in this—not the elusive justice of desert and reward, but the unfailing natural symmetry of cause and effect. The longer and harder the labor has been, the gladder you are to rest, the more intricately satisfying are all the details of the day's end: taking off the pack, changing to dry clothes and shoes and socks, resting, eating, looking around. Sitting and looking around is somehow the best of it. All day we have been in motion ourselves, and now we sit very still and watch the motions of the world: the flight of birds, the stirrings of the wind, the flowing of the river, the darkening of the day. In our weariness and stillness we watch it happen without impatience, with candid interest. It is as gratifying as watching somebody else work.

We have put in a hard day, and we have come to a good place: a smooth sand beach opposite the mouth of Solomon Branch. Towering over us, in the downstream angle between the branch and the river, is a big rust-red point of rock. While we make camp the last of the sunlight glows on this rock and then slowly rises away from it. There seems little likelihood of rain and we decide against the use of shelters, which would be hard to secure there on the open beach anyhow, simply rolling out our beds on the sand. We cook and eat and loaf and talk and finally, with the night cooling on our faces, sleep.

We are awakened a little after daylight by the calling and answering of the phoebes who live on the red cliff above us. We have breakfast, and then loaf around, waiting for the dew to dry off our bedding. Or that is one reason we put off starting. Another is that we have the hardest going still ahead of us, and we know it.

This is the day of the Roughs of the Red. The course of the river becomes choked with tremendous stones—no longer the boulder here and there of other parts of the river, but piles and barricades of boulders. Our day's journey resolves into a series of problems and solutions. We thread our way around a pool too deep to wade, climbing and stooping and straddling and crawling over and around and through a sprawl of big rocks that makes us feel like ants in a gravel pile. We cross swift deep water on stepping stones the size of automobiles that lie *almost* more that a man's

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stride apart. We work our way around one side of a large pool, only to discover that we can't pass that way, and we have to work our way back and try the other side. The way is never clear very far ahead. We keep seeing, just ahead of us, barriers that it seems to us only water could get through. Always in sight around us are the marks of the power of flowing water: the tumbled and sculptured stones, driftlogs lodged in the branches of trees and on the tops of boulders many feet above our heads. We can never quite forget here that we are traveling through the workplace of a great creative force, one of the methods of which is rampage.

A man's way through a wilderness he is familiar with has something of the nature of art; it keeps an abiding reference to knowledge and to previous use. Today we are far removed from men's ways, and are learning something of the way of nature. There are no paths going our way, and as a trail the river has become capricious and deceptive. We go through its stone maze much as the water moves through it, moving easily through the open places, pausing at the barriers to hunt a way through, and then passing, released, relieved, through the opening we have found, going on. Discovering the way for ourselves, we begin to feel that we are not simply *in* the wilderness, but that we are *part* of it, moving within it in direct response to it, moving as it requires us to move and as it moves. Our journey has become one of its processes.

This is a stretch of country that might have been deliberately meant to refute all our idle talk about "the overlasting hills." There are no everlasting hills. There is only everlasting process. Here the hills are clearly being torn down. But this, I keep reminding myself, is not destruction. It is creation. If men, with their souped-up ambitions and their panic-stricken sense of time, should attempt to work on such a scale—and they *do*—the invariable result would be destruction. But this is a scene, and a result, of the creation—which simply cannot be thought of in man's terms. It is never—except in his limited and selfish view—destructive. It is never going through a period of destruction between something created in the past and something to be created in the future. It is always creating what *is*.

It is our journey, our laborious passage through these works, that has taught us this. Passing down, contriving against obstacles, as the water passes, we have moved outside ourselves into a curious sympathy with what is happening here. We have dealt with it

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stone by stone. And so we do not now stand apart from it like real estate speculators, saying what a nice place it will be when it is finished. For we know that it *is* finished, just as it was, and as it will be. We know that only a fragment of its substance and its duration is visible to us, and that however tumultuous and chaotic the place may look it is involved in a process that is ever coherent and whole. For the wilderness, which is to say the universe, we have no words. We deal with its stones, its trees, its water. We ask ourselves which will be the best way to go. Our words are for the way we have been.

Once, in the very depths of the Roughs, we find standing in the stream a craggy stone with bluets and liverworts in bloom on it, and a few ferns. It is not large—perhaps six or eight feet in diameter, and standing three or four feet above the surface. What stops us and keeps us standing there, looking and looking, is that it is a coherent landscape, a rocky mountain landscape, exquisitely scaled and proportioned and colored, as though contrived and placed there by the most subtle of Japanese gardeners. It is uncannily all of a piece, orderly, impeccable. Like a fine work of art or a neat small farm, it is resonant with the intimation of orders too large and too small to see.

We camp that night at the head of a foot trail that will take us down to the concrete bridge on Highway 715, where we have left a car. To get there in the morning, after our days in the river, will seem a short easy walk. The rough going is all behind us now. As trials go, ours has been mostly a pleasure trip. And yet it has been difficult enough, far enough from roads and paths, to carry us beyond our usual lives into intimate touch, a sort of association, with the wild river. Though we have been gone only two days, and have never been more than a few miles from the paved road, our journey has about it the aura of great distance and long time. I lie down to sleep feeling accomplished and satisfied. I look back on our journey with a great liking. And having been so far outside myself, I find to my relief that I am glad to be back, eager to be going home.

In the morning I wake before daylight, and lie still, looking and listening. The night fades. For a while I hear in the distance the voice of one whippoorwill. And then the day birds.

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OCTAVIO PAZ

The Revolt of the Body

"SOUL" AND "BODY," "MATTER" AND "SPIRIT," "life" and "mind" are words that refer to realities that are not altogether intelligible to a Chinese, an Indian or a Persian. Different words for different realities: *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* or *māyā* and *brahman* in ancient India, "passion" and "reason" in eighteenth-century Europe or "sex" and "psyche" with us. Different words with different meanings and which, by being joined or separated, form different combinations. Furthermore: it is impossible from one cultural area to another accurately to translate the basic terms of each culture; *mukti* is not really "liberation," nor is *tê* "virtue." The same applies to the Japanese *Yugên,* the Greek *democracy* or the Buddhist *nirvāna.* All those terms, while being difficult to translate from one civilization to another, frequently change meanings with the passing of years, even go so far as to take on a meaning that is the opposite of the original one. For example: Nietzsche shows, in *The Genealogy of Morals,* that the word "virtue" for us means the opposite of what it meant for the Romans: the same is true of the Sanskrit word *bodhicitta*: its traditional meaning was the "thought of illumination," but later, in Tantric Buddhism, it also came to mean "semen." Here is the paradox of this situation: we cannot reduce the various and changing senses of these words to a single pattern of unequivocal meanings; but at the same time, we know that they constitute the common concern of all men and societies. That is to say: they are different and alike. If one examines this difficulty with care, it turns out that none of these words appears alone. Each, within its linguistic area, has a fairly well defined relationship with another, which complements it antithetically: "sex" with "psyche," "soul" with "body," "spirit" with "matter." The relationship between these words is not only bipolar, it can also be triangular, quadrangular or even circular. One example of a triangular combination: the relationship between soul, spirit and body in medieval Christianity; a circular one: the wheel of death and rebirth in Hinduism or Buddhism. The basic relationship,

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however, is that of pairs. This is a universal phenomenon, one perhaps dependent on the very make-up of the human psyche.

The relationship between these terms can, fundamentally, only be one of opposition or affinity. May I point out, besides, that too much opposition cancels out one of the terms or sets them so far apart that the relationship vanishes; on the other hand, too much affinity may destroy it by fusing the two terms. The relationship, then, is constantly threatened either by over-conjunction or by over-disjunction; moreover, absolute equality between the two produces neutralization and, consequently, immobility. Thus, the ideal relationship requires in the first place a slight imbalance of forces; in the second place a relative autonomy of each term in relation to the other. This slight imbalance is sublimation (culture) on the one hand, and, on the other, the possibility of watering culture with spontaneity (creation); and this limited autonomy is called freedom. It is essential that the relationship should not be quiet: the dialogue between motion and stillness is what breathes life into culture and imposes form on life. Another rule, inspired like the foregoing by the discoveries of anthropology: the terms can only be understood in connection with each other, not when they are considered singly. This is something that Chuang-Tzu had already said: the word "life" only has meaning in relation to the word "death," "heat" in relation to "cold," "dryness" in relation to "humidity." In the end, faced with the impossibility of translating the terms which, in each civilization, make up the relationship (soul/body, *puruṣa prakṛti, t'ien/ch'i*) it would be best to use two logical symbols that would include them all. Or else, the words *body* and *non-body,* in as much as it is understood that they have no meaning at all, except that of expressing a contradictory relationship. *Non-body* means neither *atman* nor *tê* nor *psyche*; it is simply the opposite of body. As for *body,* it has no special connotation: it stands for the opposite of *non-body.*

It seems to me that if the observations I have just touched upon were developed further, to the point of being given a systematic formulation, it might be possible to derive from them a method of investigation applicable to the study both of societies and individuals. In short, I believe it might be possible to combine the fundamental signs of all civilizations. Let me explain that mine is

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a modest proposal: I suggest something less than a syntax or a morphology of cultures: a thermometer. A very simple instrument to gauge the temperature of a spirit and of a civilization. The temperature chart of a given society over any given period clearly does not coincide with its history, but the rising and falling curves give a valuable indication of its vitality, its resilience and its ability to face more ups and downs. By comparing the temperature charts of various civilizations we can learn, rather we can confirm what we all empirically know, that there are cold civilizations, hot civilizations and others in which periods of fever abruptly alternate with periods of ice. And how do civilizations die? Some, the cold ones, from a heat explosion; the hot ones in a slow freezing which first desiccates, then reduces to dust; others, too tight and enclosed, perish the moment they are exposed to the elements; others, slumbering in the warmth of a moral temperature at once pleasurable and insidious, die out gradually; others, in the delirium of a fever, commit suicide.

It is no exaggeration to say that the fate of a society depends in large part on the relationship between its fundamental signs: *body* and *non-body*. I have already said that this relationship cannot be anything but unstable. The concepts of health and normalcy cannot apply in this domain, since this relationship is precisely a reflection of our inborn "sickness": that of being animals which secrete culture, spirit, institutions. Conversely, however vacillating and precarious the relationship—perpetually exposed to the assaults of death and life—there *are* rare moments of dynamic balance. Those are not moments of truce, but of contradictory and creative dialogue. Again: this dialogue is expressed in only two ways: conjunction and disjunction. In Greek and Roman antiquity, in India and in China, conjunction was the way in which body and non-body were related. In the West and in the Islamic world, it was disjunction. One example among many: ancient China conceived of culture as the cultivation of nature, harmony between cosmic and human societies; the modern West conceives of culture as a mastering of the natural world. Western disjunction prevents any dialogue between the body sign and the non-body sign and thus, fatally, leads us to increasing sublimation. "Thus the path of cumulative sublimation," Norman Brown says, "is also the path of cumulative aggression and guilt, aggression being the

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revolt of the baffled instincts against the desexualized and inadequate world, and guilt being the revolt against the desexualized and inadequate self." The result is an explosion. One need not expatiate on Western atrocities. Moreover, I readily admit that those of other civilizations have been no less terrible. I do, however, stress the peculiar tone of Western violence; for the West, alien societies always have been (still are) an incarnation of evil: manifestations of the lower world, namely that of the body. The West has treated the peoples under its dominion in much the same way as an ascetic chastizes his senses; rather, it literally treated them as though they were bodies. The difference between the rule of Spanish and Portuguese Catholics and that of Anglo-Saxon Protestants in America is simply an expression of the differences in their basic approach to the body. For the Catholics of the Counter-Reformation mediation between the body and the non-body was still possible; consequence: conversion and miscegenation. For the Protestants the abyss was unredeemable: result: extermination of the American Indians or segregation of their tribes in reservations.

The West: extreme disjunction and no less extreme violence. Violence against nature, against suppressed peoples, and against the passions of both. The dialogue between non-body and body takes on the form of a struggle. A dialectic of repression and explosion. The internal responses to Western repression have been as violent as have external reactions to colonial oppression. Besides, they have from the beginning assumed bizarre and fantastic forms. The Dutch sinologist, Van Gulik, in his "Sexual Life in Ancient China," points out that there are very few sexual perversions and aberrations to be found in the erotic literature of Chinese civilization. Anyone who has read Chinese erotic stories will agree. The same is true of literature and art in India, whether it be sculpture, novels, poetry, or works of erotology. Tantric texts are an exception, and even there scatological and bloody rituals aim precisely at re-absorbing the destructive instinct. The conjunctive relationship in ancient China prevented the over-development of sadism and masochism. No civilization, with the possible exception of the Aztec, could produce an art whose sexual ferocity would rival that of the West. And there is a difference with the Aztecs: their art was religious sublimation; ours is secular. Because

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when speaking of cruelty, I am not referring to the dark representations of religious art at the end of the Middle Ages or during the Counter-Reformation in Spain: I am thinking of modern art, from the eighteenth century to today. De Sade is unique, and he is so because in that respect the Western world has been unique. The relationship between non-body and body in European erotic works takes the form: torture/orgasm. Death spurs pleasure and rules over life. From De Sade to the *Story of O*, eroticism is a funeral chant or a sinister pantomime. The body becomes knife or stone; the world of matter, of nature, breathing, beating, becomes an abstraction: a sharp-edged syllogism, doing away with life and in the end cutting off its own head. Strange condemnation: killing oneself and so reviving, to kill oneself again.

In areas less pregnant with aggression than the modern erotic novel, violence explodes with as much energy although with less fantastic cruelty. For instance, the fight for free love, sex education, the repeal of those laws that punish sexual aberrations, and other demands of the same kind. The right to love, the struggle for sexual equality between women and men, the freedom of instincts: this is the vocabulary of politics and war. True, the analogy between loving and fighting appears in all civilizations, but in none save ours does it take the form of revolutionary protest. The love battle is a game, a play for the Indian or the Chinese; for the Western man, the warlike metaphor immediately takes on a military and political meaning, with its attendant proclamations, regulations, standards and duties. Nothing could be farther from hand-to-hand combat. The fanaticism of sexual rebels is the counterpart of puritanical severity: there is an ethics of dissolution as well as one of repression, and both weigh down their faithful with equally exorbitant claims. Another example: our attitude toward sexual deviation. Chinese literature has little to say on the matter of male homosexuality and does so lightly; with regard to female homosexuality, its attitude is benevolent. Rather than a problem of ethics it is one of vital cosmic economics: there is nothing shameful in copulation between men; it does harm because the excessive practice of it is a waste of the precious feminine *ch'i* (vital substance). Indian literature and art are still more scanty, although erotic prints abound in lesbian themes. It is clear that neither civilization was ignorant of such deviations. If they did not

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praise them as did the Greeks, the Persians and the Arabs, they did not persecute them with the passion of the West. The "nefarious practice" is another peculiarity of Christianity. In Delhi as well as in other cities and towns of Uttar Pradesh and Rajastán, there is a sect of musicians and dancers who go through the streets and squares in women's clothes. They are traveling artists, who engage in male prostitution on the side. They are frequently and almost compulsorily found at ceremonies and celebrations of births and weddings, among Hindus as well as Moslems. In today's Victorian India—disfigured by the double heritage of English and Moslem puritanism—no one talks about them, but no one does without their songs and dances when a child is born or when there is a wedding in the family. In the West homosexuals tend to be vindictive and there is something conspiratorial about their meetings. Another practice that in the East is considered rather to be an exercise of physical and mental hygiene: masturbation. Whether it deals with heterosexual, homosexual or solitary practices, our eroticism aims at re-forming not at con-forming. For that reason the history of the body sign, in this period of the West, is the history of its revolt.

I believe that in no other period and in no other civilization has the impulse toward erotic freedom manifested itself as a purely or predominantly sexual subversion. No less disquieting is the fact that a revolt of the senses should take the form of social and political demands. To include sex in the catalogue of human rights is as much of a paradox as to regulate married copulation by rules of good government. Yet, there is a difference: good Confucian government was intended to preserve society and was related to a reality both natural and ideal: heaven and its course (*T'ien tao*); sexuality as a right tends to change society and is related to a purely ideal, abstract reality. We are demanding sexual freedom not in the name of the body, which is not subject to law, but in the name of an ideal entity: man. Erotically oriented movements of other civilizations, such as late Taoism and Tantrism, were religious; in other cases—"*l'amour courtois*" and romantic passion are the nearest examples—they were born and lived at the borders of aesthetics, religion and philosophy. In the West, since the eighteenth century, eroticism has been intellectual and revolutionary. Libertine philosophers were atheists and ma-

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terialists first, sensualists and hedonists second. Their eroticism was a consequence of their materialism and atheism, part of their polemics against the repressive power of king and church. The struggle between the *body* and the *non-body* signs became an intellectual debate and the fight moved from the realm of images, symbols and rituals to that of ideas and theories. The transition from religion to philosophy and from aesthetics to politics was the beginning of the disembodiment of the body. *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* are a treatise of revolutionary philosophy, not a manual of sexual manners like the *Kamasutra,* or a guide to illumination like the *Hevjara Tantra.* Since the ancients were aware of the practices described by de Sade, the novelty was not in recording their existence but in transforming them into opinions: they ceased to be abominations or sacred rituals (depending on the civilizations), and became ideas.

The new phenomenon is not that eroticism is fashionable but that eroticism has become a branch of politics. In the past, religious and philosophical ideas were professed, but there were, strictly speaking, no political ideas. Reason: politics was not an idea. Public action was a matter of ethics or of expediency: an art, a technique, a sacred duty, as in the republic of Rome. All that had little or nothing to do with the idea of politics as a theory. By contrast, our politics is fundamentally theoretical: a world view. De Sade's sexology is a revolutionary philosophy, a politics: he brandishes aberrations the way a speaker levels the grievances of the people at the government. It is true that among the Greeks politics was a central activity, the attribute that set the citizen apart not only from the slave but also from the barbarian. But it was neither a philosophy nor a religion; its end was individual and collective: in the first place, to stand out before others through the persuasiveness of virtuous example or the ability to use rhetoric, and thus win fame, renown and, eventually, realize the ideal of the citizen; in the second, to contribute to the welfare of the *polis*: the independence of the city or its power, the freedom of its citizens or their happiness. In neither case is politics a theory. True, political concern is at the center of Plato's work and Aristotle's. But their political doctrines, as well as the Stoics', were not a world theory but a projection of their respective world theories in the area of society and the State. For the Encyclopedists, and, later,

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for Marx, theory was not only inseparable from practice, it *was*, as theory, practice, action upon the world. For the ancients, theory was literally an object of contemplation; for us theory, because it is theory, is politics. Or: in the Western world today, politics is a theory and a world view. In a society such as Chinese society, concerned above all with preserving social order and the continuity of culture, censorship itself was an imperial function: the throne appointed ministers and censors the way a gardener uses in turn manure and shears. So politics was part of cosmology (the law of the heavens) and of the art of cultivation. In our society, science and culture are expressions of classes and civilizations: they are history and, in the last resort, politics. When I say that politics for us is a world view, I am being slightly inaccurate: our concept of the world is not a view, it is a judgment, hence it is also an action, a practice. The image of the world or rather the concept of the world as an image, has given way to another concept, or image: that of the theory of revolution. Our concept of the world is *to change it*. Politics and revolution are synonymous.

Since the eighteenth century, the word "revolution" has ceased to mean only changing the system, and has come to mean something more, something unprecedented: changing human nature. In Christian medieval society as well as in others, the transmutation of man was a peculiarly religious operation; not even philosophers, with the exception of such religious philosophers as Plato, ventured into that realm. But Christianity, in its Western form, transferred the traditional calling of all religions to the revolutionary parties: they, not grace or sacraments, are the agents of transmutation. This transfer coincides with another in the realm of art and poetry. In the past, the first and ultimate end of art had been to celebrate or condemn human life; since the German Romantics, and with greater energy after Rimbaud, it has been poetry's purpose to *change life*. Social revolution and revolutionary art became religious undertakings or, at least, undertakings of the sort that antiquity had always considered to be the sole prerogative of religion. In this distribution of the remains of religion, revolution was left with ethics, law and public institutions: the *non-body*. Art was left with symbols, ceremonies, images: all that I have called the embodiment of images and which is the sublimated, though perceptible expression of the *body* sign.

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The revolt of the senses, as a part of general change, has been expressed at times as social demand and at others as the poetics of life—I mean: the fusion of poetry and sexual love, according to the romantic and the surrealist conceptions. This is one of the facets, more exactly one of the roots of the ambivalence of modern art, perpetually torn between expressing life, either in celebration or condemnation, and reforming it. Artists and poets of modern times identified with revolutionaries in setting out to destroy the old images of religion and monarchy, but they could not go along with them in replacing these symbols with mere ideological abstractions. The crisis began with the German Romantics, divided between their initial sympathy for the French Revolution and their corporal and analogical idealism. We are indebted to Novalis for some of the most lucid maxims on eroticism and the relationship between the body of man and that of the cosmos; he is also the author of one of the most reactionary essays of the time: *Europe and Christianity*. The conflict, far from abating, has become more acute during the past fifty years. There is no need to recall the misfortunes of surrealism, Mayakovsky's suicide or the moral martyrdom of César Vallejo. When the Peruvian poet, at the height of his communist *"engagement,"* chides the "Bolshevik bishops," he does not blame them so much for their arrogance or their petty theological sectarianism as for having failed to transform the idea of proletarian brotherhood into a true communion: a ritual without god but not without sacraments; nostalgia for the symbol embodied in the Eucharist.

The two revolutions of the West, the French and the Soviet, exalted the *non-body* sign, and in both it was made into a revolutionary agent and the pedagogue of society. It served to sublimate the revolt of the senses and make it moral. In its more radical forms it transformed this revolt into a struggle for the erotic rights either of women or of sexual minorities. In its moderate forms it channeled it: action in favor of sex education and health, introduction of a more rational legislation regarding monogamous marriage, the abolition of barbarous punishment for erotic aberrations, and other similar reforms. None of this was or is what flaming senses demanded: they demanded images, symbols, rituals; imaginary yet real forms of our desires and obsessions; ceremonies in which images at last gain a body without ceasing to be images.

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The new materialism asserts with as much emphasis as did the old religions that it holds the key to the universe. I do not know that it really does. On the other hand, I am sure that it has not been able to give us an image either of this world or of others. Its universe has no body, and the stuff it is made of is as abstract and incorporeal as an idea. Its science tells us how genitals work, and it has taught us more about it than all the *Kamasutra,* but it has not given us an erotics: in its manuals the words "pleasure" and "imagination" have been superseded by "orgasm" and "health." It prescribes techniques for retaining reproductive power, regulating the birth of children, cleansing our psyche of the cobwebs of fear, exorcising the ghosts of father and mother: it teaches us how to be normal, not how to fall in love or experience passion. Nothing is farther from an art of loving. Explaining how the body is, it discards its image. To all this must be added the vogue of sport, which has introduced some confusion between vigor and beauty, physical dexterity and erotic knowledge. There is nothing strange in the reaction of today's youth, its predilection for garish clothes, fantastic ornaments, decadent or wild hairstyles, far-out makeup or even personal dirtiness. Better to smell bad than to use the toilet water advertised on TV. . . . The grey freedom of industrial society, false freedom that makes passion into a hygiene. The positions of the bodies in the *Kamasutra* are projected against an imaginary landscape, the conventional *"décor"* of *Kavya* poetry; the backdrop for the descriptions of modern erotology, when it is not macabre, is outright crude.

All is not hygiene and comfort in developed industrial society. Besides the lack of fantasy and sensuousness, there is also the degradation of the body. Science has reduced it to a series of molecular and chemical combinations: capitalism to the status of consumer good, like other products of industry. *Bourgeois* society has divided eroticism into three provinces: one, hazardous, regulated by the penal code; another, by the ministry of health and social welfare; and the third by the entertainment industry. Orgasm is the universal goal—one of the many goals of production, more rapid and ephemeral than others. Industry has become the erotics of capitalism. In communist countries the old Christian morality has given way to a kind of neo-Confucianism—less literate and more obtuse than that of the Ch'ing dynasty. Speaking of Soviet puri-

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tanism, I am not referring to the relatively tolerant period inaugurated by Khrushchev. In Stalin's time the regime knew a terror as universal as the laws of logic and as irrational as nightmares. How many millions died in the "work rehabilitation camps" and in the collectivization, not to speak of the million executed during the purges? It is useful to recall this from time to time because men—intellectuals above all and especially left-wing intellectuals who are infatuated with systems—are animals with a short memory. The first rule of a truly free education would be to inspire children with a distaste for to-day's doctrines of "compulsory happiness." Their paradises are covered with gallows. . . . In the first half of the twentieth century, not satisfied with having adopted the neutral manners of science and applied the efficient methods of industrial mass production to sexuality, the *non-body* sign put on its old hangman habit and took part in politics, sometimes as an executioner for the Third Reich, other times as a People's Commissar.

Persecuted by the worshippers of affluence and by those of revolution, the body sought refuge in art. The remains of the body—a form disfigured by repression and anger, martyred by guilt and irony. In the art of the past, the distortions of the human figure were ritualistic; in ours they are aesthetic or psychological. Example of the former: the aggressive rationalism of cubism; and of the latter: the no less aggressive emotionalism of expressionism. Subjectivity—rational, sentimental or simply ironic, but always guilty—takes its revenge. I am not forgetting that, since Rousseau and Blake, there has been a secret line of celebration of the body that comes down to our time; nor do I forget that whenever it reaches the historical surface it is suppressed or absorbed by the reigning ethics-aesthetics. The truth is that contemporary art has not given us an image of the body: that mission we have left to the fashion designers and advertising men. This is not, of course, a fault of current art but a deficiency in our society. Art reveals and celebrates the image of the body that each civilization invents. Better said, the image of the body is not invented: it germinates, it drops down from the body of the world like a fruit. The image of the body is the double of that of the cosmos, the human answer to the non-human archetype. Each civilization has viewed the body in a different way because each had a different

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idea of the world. Body and world fondle each other: the virgins of Chartres smile like the girls of Crete but their smile is different: they smile with another world—with the other world. The same is true of the reflective posture of the powerful Bodhisattva of Mathura or the torn whiteness of Mantegna's Saint Sebastian, bristling with arrows. The universe unfolds in the body, which is its mirror and its creature. Ours is a critical epoch: it has undone the ancient image of the world and it has not created another. We have therefore no body. We have an art of disembodiment, like Mallarmé's, or hilarious, chilling art like the paintings of Marcel Duchamp. The final image of the Christian Virgin, the ideal lady of the Provençaux and the Great Goddess of the Mediterranean, is *La Mariée mise à nu par ses célibataires, même*. The painting is divided into two parts: at the top the goddess, transformed into a motor; at the bottom her worshippers, her victims and her lovers—neither Acteon, nor Adonis, nor Mars, but nine non-entities in uniforms of policemen, porters and curates. Semen, the vital essence of the Taoists, has become a kind of love gasoline, which ignites *before* it touches the body of the Bride. From ritual to electric toy: an infernal buffoonery.

The idea of revolution is the major invention of the Western world. Societies of the past had no real revolutions, only changes of regime, empire or dynasty. Apart from these changes, they experienced profound transformations: the birth, death and resurrection of religions. Here again our times are unique. If the modern West is coming to an end, as many claim and as we are told by the very reality all of us live, the clearest indication of the approaching end is what Ortega y Gasset prophetically called "the decline of revolutions." It is true that we never had so many; it is also true that none of them corresponds to the Western idea of what a revolution is. This point is essential because, at the same time, no other society had made the revolution its focal ideal. Like the early Christians expecting the Apocalypse, modern society has been watching, since 1870, for the coming of the Revolution. And revolution comes: not the expected one, but another, always another. Faced with an unexpected reality which cheats us, theologians speculate and try to show, in the manner of Confucian mandarins, that the "mandate of heaven" (the idea of revolution) is the same: what happens is that the prince (the concrete revolu-

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tion) is unworthy of the mandate—except that there comes a time when people cease to believe in the speculations of theologians. This is what has begun to happen in the second half of our century. We are now witnessing the conclusion: the rebellion against the system is at the same time a rebellion against revolution as a system. The revolt of the underdeveloped peoples and student rebellion in the developed countries attack at its very center, perhaps unwittingly, the idea of revolution as well as the conservative idea of order.

The twilight of the idea of revolution is matched by the swiftness with which, in contrast to ancient religions, revolutionary movements are transformed into rigid systems. The best definition that I know of this process is that of a *guerillero* from Michoacán: "all revolutions degenerate into governments." The other heir of Christianity, art, is in no better position. But its collapse does not derive from the intolerant rigidity of a system—it derives from the promiscuity of trends and manners. Art lives and dies of its inborn disease: style. There is no art that does not produce a style and there is no style that does not in the end kill art. By introducing the idea of revolution in art, our epoch has created a multiplicity of styles and pseudo-styles. This abundance dissolves into another, an abundance of styles no sooner born than dead. Schools proliferate and spread like spots of mould until their very multiplicity ends up blurring the differences between one trend and the next; movements last as long as insects do: a few hours; the aesthetics of novelty, surprise and change dissolve into imitation, tedium, repetition. . . . What are we left with? In the first place with the weapon of the dying: humor. As the Irish poet, Patrick Kavanagh, said to the doctor who was visiting him: "I'm afraid I'm not going to die. . . ." We are left with scoffing at death and so conjuring it. We are left with starting again.

What inspires me in the student revolts, more than their generous but hazy politics, is the reappearance of passion as a magnetic reality. We are not faced with a new rebellion of the senses, although love is not absent from it, but with an explosion of emotions and feelings. A search for the *body* sign, not as a cipher for pleasure (although we should not be afraid of the word "pleasure": it is beautiful in all languages), but as a magnet that attracts all the opposite forces that inhabit us. Point of reconcilia-

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tion of man with others and with himself; and at the same time, point of departure, beyond the body, towards the Other. The young are discovering the values that fired such diverse figures as Blake and Rousseau, Novalis and Breton: spontaneity, the negation of man-made society and its hierarchies, brotherhood not only towards men but towards nature, a capacity for enthusiasm and also for indignation, and for the wonderful ability—the ability to wonder. In one word: the heart. In that sense, their rebellion is different from those that preceded it during this century, with the exception of the surrealist rebellion. The tradition of the young is more poetic and religious than philosophical and political; like romanticism, which it resembles in more ways than one, their rebellion is not so much intellectual dissidence, philosophical heterodoxy, as passional, vital, libertarian heresy. To be sure, the ideology of the young is frequently a simplification, an unjudging reduction of the revolutionary tradition of the West, itself scholastic and intolerant. The contagion of system-thinking has spread to many groups who arrogantly put forth such authoritarian and dogmatic theses as Maoism and other theological fanaticisms. To embrace as a political philosophy "Chinese-style Marxism" and to pretend to apply it to the industrial societies of the West is both preposterous and distressing. But it isn't the ideology of the young, it is their open attitude, their sensitivity more than their thinking, which is truly new and unique. I think that in them and through them, albeit in an obscure and confused fashion, another potentiality of the Western world is emerging: something that ideologists had not foreseen and that only poets had envisioned, something still shapeless as a world awakening. Or is it an illusion, and are those upheavals the last gleams of a dying hope?

Listening to any participant or eyewitness of the student rebellion of May 1968 in Paris is an experience that tests our ability to judge objectively. In all the accounts that I have heard there appears a startling note: the passionate and selfless tone of the revolt, as though action and representation were indistinguishable: the mutiny became a holiday, and political discussion a ceremony, reaching from epic theater at one extreme to public confession at the other. The secret of the fascination that the movement exerted on all those, spectators included, who came near the demonstra-

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tions, lay in the attempt at uniting politics, art and eroticism. Fusion of private passion and public passion, a continuous flux and reflux between wonder and everyday life, action experienced as aesthetic representation, a conjunction of acting and the celebration of it. Meeting of man and his image: the reflection of the mirror dissolving into another luminous body. An experience of true conversion: not only a change of ideas—a change of sensibility. More than a change of being, a *return to being*. A social and psychic revelation that for a few days stretched the limits of reality and extended the domain of the possible. The return to origins, the beginning of beginnings: to be oneself by being with all. Recovery of the word: my words are yours, to speak with you is to speak with myself. Reappearance of communion, transfiguration, the changing of water into wine and of word into body—all the things that religions claim as their own but which are older than they and constitute the other dimension of man, his other half and his lost kingdom. Man, perpetually harried, thrown into time and in search of *another* time—a forbidden, inaccessible time: the now. Not the eternity of religions but the burning of the now-moment: consummation and abolition of calendar time. What is the way to this present? André Breton spoke once of the possibility of infusing into modern life an *extra-religious* sacredness, composed of the triangle: love, poetry and rebellion. This *sacredness* can only emerge from the ground of collective experience. Society must display it, embody it, live it and so live itself, burn itself: Revolt as a road to Enlightenment. Here and now: a leap to the other shore.

Nostalgia for the Fiesta. But the Fiesta is an expression of the cyclical time of myth, it is the present returning, inasmuch as we live in the linear and secular time of progress and history. Perhaps the student revolt is an empty Fiesta, the calling, the invocation of an ever-future happening that will never be present—will never come to be. Or perhaps it is a commemoration: Revolution no longer appears as the elusive imminence of the future, but as a past to which we cannot return and which we cannot abandon. In either case it isn't here, it is there, always beyond. Possessed by the memory of its future or of its past, by what was or by what could be—no, not possessed; deserted, empty: orphaned of its origins and of its future—society mimics them. By mimicking

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them, it exorcises them: for a few weeks it denies itself in the blasphemy and sacrilege of its youth, to assert itself later more completely and entirely through repression. Victim anointed by the ambiguous prestige of profanation, youth is the expiatory scapegoat of the ceremony: in youth, after having profaned itself, society punishes itself. Symbolic profanation and punishment: everything is a performance, including what happened on 2 October 1968 on the Plaza de Tlatelolco in Mexico City, when the modern ceremony recalled (repeated) the Aztec ritual: several hundred young men and women immolated, on the ruins of a pyramid, by the Army and the Police. The literalness of the rite—the reality of the sacrifice—dreadfully underlines the unreal and expiatory character of the repression: in these young people the Mexican regime was punishing its own revolutionary past. But this is not the place to discuss the case of Mexico. . . . What I am interested in emphasizing now is a phenomenon no less universal than the student revolt: the attitude of the working class and of the parties that represent it, or claim to represent it. In all instances and in all countries, the workers have taken no part in the movement, except as temporary allies—*à contre-coeur*. Such indifference is difficult to explain unless we accept one of two hypotheses: either the working class is not a revolutionary class, or the student revolt is not confined to the classical framework of class struggle (but merely one of its epiphenomena). In truth, those two hypotheses are one and the same; if the working class isn't (any longer) revolutionary while, nonetheless, social conflicts and struggles, far from subsiding, are becoming more acute: if, moreover, the recrudescence of these struggles does not coincide with an economic crisis but with a period of abundance: if, finally, no new worldwide exploited class has appeared that could be substituted for the proletariat in its revolutionary mission . . . it is obvious that the theory of class struggle cannot account for present-day phenomena. Not that it is false: it is insufficient, and we must seek another principle, another explanation. Some will say that underdeveloped countries are the new proletariat. It is almost idle to reply: the phenomenon of colonial subservience is not new (Marx knew it), and these countries do not constitute a class; for this reason, as well as because of their lack of social, economic and historical homogeneity, they do not

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and cannot have universal programs and plans as would an international class, party or church. As to youth: no amount of dialectical subtlety or imaginative cunning can transform it into a social class. So much so, that from the point of view of revolutionary doctrines what seems really difficult to explain is the attitude of the students: they have nothing to gain, no philosophy has appointed them the agents of history and they express no universal historical principle. Strange situation: they are as unaware of the real drama of history as the Biblical lamb was of the dialogue between Jehovah and Abraham. The strangeness vanishes if it is recognized that the victim, like the whole rite, is a representation; or rather, a hypostasis of the ancient revolutionary classes. The modern world was born with the democratic revolution of the *bourgeoisie* who, so to speak, nationalized and collectivized politics. The idea was that by opening to the collectivity a sphere which had hitherto been the preserve of the few, general politicization (democracy) would immediately result in the distribution of power among all. Although democracy, through the device of parties and the manipulations of the information media, has become a method for controlling and hoarding power, we harbor the ghosts of revolutionary democracy: all the principles, beliefs, ideas and modes of living and feeling that gave birth to our world. Nostalgia and remorse. Owing to this, probably, society celebrates costly and sometimes bloody revolutionary rituals. The ceremony commemorates an absence or, more exactly, summons, conjures and punishes, all at once, an Absent One. The Absent One has a public name and another one that is secret: the first is Revolution and refers to history's linear time; the other is Fiesta and evokes the circular time of myths. They are one and the same: the Revolution that comes back is the Fiesta, the beginning of the beginning returning. Except that they do not come back really: everything is a pantomime, and the next day fast and penance. Fiesta of the goddess Reason—without Robespierre and the guillotine, but with tear gas and television. Revolt as a verbal orgy, a saturnalia of clichés. A sick Fiesta.

Or is the student rebellion one more sign that we are living an *end of times*? Maybe modern time, linear time, corresponding to the ideas of progress and history, always thrusting toward the future; the time of the *non-body* sign, bent on dominating nature

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and governing the instincts; the time of sublimation, aggression and self-mutilation: our time—is coming to an end. Maybe we are entering another time, one that has not yet revealed its form, and of which we can say nothing except that it will be neither linear nor cyclical time, neither history nor myth. The time that is coming, if indeed we are living a coming of times, a general reckoning, will be neither a future nor a past, but a present. This, at least, is what, obscurely, today's rebellions claim. Nor do art and poetry demand anything different, though sometimes artists and poets do not know it. The return of the present: the time that is coming is defined by a *here* and *now*. Thus it is a negation of the *non-body* sign in all its Western versions, be they religious or godless, philosophical or political, materialistic or idealistic. The present does not project us into anything beyond—multicolored eternities of the other world or abstract paradises of the end of history—but into the marrow, the invisible center of time: here and now. Carnal time, mortal time. The present is not beyond reach, it is not a forbidden territory. How can it be touched, how can its transparent heart be penetrated? I do not know and I do not think that anyone does. . . . Perhaps the alliance of poetry and rebellion will give us the vision. I see in their conjunction the chance for a return of the *body* sign: the incarnation of images, the return of the human figure, radiant and radiating with symbols. If contemporary rebellion (and I am not only thinking of youth) does not spend itself in a succession of outcries or degenerate into authoritarian and closed systems, if it spells out its passion as poetic imagination in the freest, widest sense of the word "poetry," our disbelieving eyes will witness the awakening and the return to our abject world of the corporal and spiritual reality that we call *beloved presence*. And then love will cease to be the isolated experience of an individual or of a couple, an exception, a scandal. . . . For the first and for the last time the word *presence* and the word *love* appear in these reflections. They were the seed of the Western world, the origins of our art and of our poetry. The secret of our resurrection lies in them.

[*Translated from the Spanish by Monique Fong*]

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RICHMOND LATTIMORE

In Memoriam

Elsie Campbell Sinclair Hodge, AB 1897. Born Dec. 15, 1874. Died in the massacre of Christians at Paotingfu, China, June, 1900.

This is the stone bench on the Bryn Mawr campus.
Sometimes in mild weather I teach my classes
at the bench of Elsie, killed by Chinese Boxers.

Mobs, rage, weapons. The sleeping dragon shook
his scales between the spells before his last
awakening to red fire and howling guards.

The quaint and pretty graduating class,
round-eyed before the camera, gave her up
to her short duties, love, and violent death.

The Empress of India, small, yacht-prowed,
reeling in high waters off the Aleutians
(those stormy gray ships on the Eastern Grand Circle),

carried my parents, innocent and clever,
squeezed by hard means from their own academe,
to China, months and dollars away from home.

Where Elsie's blood was only six years faded,
at the hired temple, next the lily pond,
I was born in Paotingfu. The stars are joined.

All taught. It's in our blood, a hard gray strain
to discipline our little furies, knot
our stormy-colored lusts into cool form

until dragons shall dim their fires and smile.

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The Lake Island of Iannina

Without Iannina this island would have no identity.
It needs and has a small city near, to get away from.
Iannina drapes her shores with mosques minarets and clock
towers,

clean streets and sordid alleys, filigree shops and barracks
and too many policemen. She guards her gray lake with
memories
of Ali Pasha, of repression and murder, the drowned Greek
women.

But the island across the water lies becalmed in reeds,
water forests secreting snipe coots and godwits.
At the corner grows a minute stone and plaster paved village.

Avenues are cut through the reeds for their boat landings.
Everyone has a boat protected by tiny breakwaters.
They fish and seine the lake and serve the visitor

frogs if desired, brown crisp sections of eels, crayfish
scarlet and like infinitesimal lobsters with claws
surpassing their inch-long bodies. It is true

there was murder and treachery here, a century and a half
ago, but violence sleeps in the waters of tradition, charmed
into a ceremony of sentimental pictures, false stories

of true love. Rather, what is escape more than a remote
island in a remote lake? What if the postman steps
from the boat with a bag half full of air mail envelopes

from relatives in America? Strands to the outworld
are almost invisible. Gray reeds sheathed and filmed in gray
water.
A small world of minute specialties hides in the reeds.

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First Flight

Sitting in the long corridor
and from behind glass
I watch the big ducks waddle out and pass,
open and close, spin roar
and turn, accelerate, lift, and soar:

and my number comes up (who? me?
Why did they spin
that bottle?) The goodbye kiss (hastily).
The walk (last?) Slammed door.
I'm sealed in.

(I'm brain stuff, I'm
the gray matter in the bone shell
I imagined, I'm
the population of my own tidy hell).

The map reels. Shake tilt and climb,
level and float
on fleece. I'm Wynken Blynken and Nod,
and my bed is like a little boat
(but it isn't a bed), or I'm
nearer my God to thee;
but why ever me?

(But angels do it dreams do it eagles do
it. But not stuffed like a fish
in a bottle, not as all one frail
old egg in one steel basket).

Now we sail
in cotton wool and muffle through
into clear sudden air,
and stare
and aim at the toy houses of a toy town,
miss the tops, bump lightly, wheel

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in, open, and totter down
into a civilized field
populated and miles from everywhere

The Last Train out of White River Junction

In the barren station, myself alone,
I sit and write
my diary on the stroke of one.
How much sleep tonight?

Train's in. The whole
crew's drunk. Obscenities
rock the dark. I roll
doubled up on a short seat. Amenities

are absent. Do I regret
the airport's nylon efficiency,
the sleek and terrifying jet?
No. Safety is sufficiency.
I like this bet-

ter. But my mind's
a mess of tired facts,
and I hurt, but pull the blinds,
and sleep, poleaxed,

in shirt and pants for an hour.
Then it won't work.
I need a shower.

They threw us off in New York.

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Atlantis Now

They have their drowned dominion, cities made
of coral, sand, and wet stone, silences
where hand in hand the sunken cherubs promenade
the seamless miles between pelargic trees

of weeds waving, and helmed and armed in shell
the sea-knights swim on their improbable quest,
design improbable combats, and dispel
the soundless tumults of their soft unrest.

Their sessions are water, bloodless argument
unseals a ghost of purpose in their state;
marriage of minds and blends of thought invent
the shapes that these blue realms incorporate.

And at small tables by their cavern door
the old myth makers, in gray hats and pale
raincoats, deliberate the ocean floor,
assess, drink coffee, and compose the tale.

The Flowering Meadows

Our sessions could be bleak in that small office
through sterile numbers, a desert of guesses
that never gave; with too many coffees
that killed no yawns in our long idlenesses,

sitting cross, counting failures like sheep,
until some germ took life, some min-
iature miracle, like an omen in sleep,
achieved the combination, and let us in

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on the meadow, and suddenly the waving
crests were lush, and we went waist deep in absolute
luxury, reaping, raving,
and the ripe keys fell like fruit.

Comfort for barren hours,
for the long dry daydreams uninvolved
with answers. Once and again we found flowers.
Some problems get solved.

When you are old: after Ronsard

When you are old, you will sit late and spin your wool
by candle light beside the fire, and you will say,
as you admire these verses that I make today:
"Ronsard praised me, when I was young and beautiful."
Then each of those old servants who attend your days,
dreaming and half asleep for work and weariness,
will start up when they hear you say *Ronsard,* and bless
your name for being given such immortal praise.
I shall be underground, a disembodied shade
lolling among the myrtles of the shadowy glade.
You will be an old crone huddled above your grate,
regretting my lost love and sorry for your scorn.
Trust me, live now, do not await tomorrow's morn,
but pluck life's roses now, before it is too late.

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HAYDEN CARRUTH

I Know, I Remember, but How Can I Help You

The northern lights I wouldn't have noticed them
if the deer hadn't told me
a doe her coat of pearls her glowing hoofs
proud and inquisitive
eager for my appraisal
and I went out into the night with electrical steps
but with my head held also proud
to share the animal's fear
and see what I had seen before
a sky flaring and spectral
greenish waves and ribbons
and the snow under strange light tossing in the pasture
like ocean in storm caught
by a flaring beacon.
The deer stands not far from me not far
among black bare appletrees
a presence I no longer see.
We are proud to be afraid
proud to share
the silent magnetic storm that destroys the stars
and flickers around our heads
like the saints' cold spiritual agonies
of old.
I remember but without the sense other light-storms
cold memories discursive and philosophical
in my mind's burden
and the deer remembers nothing.
We move our feet crunching bitter snow while the storm
crashes like god-wars down the east
we shake the sparks from our eyes
we quiver inside our shocked fur
we search for each other

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in the apple thicket—
a glimpse, an acknowledgment
it is enough and never enough—
we toss our heads and say good night
moving away on bitter bitter snow.

The End Again

Moonlight. Metaphorical of
Abstract perfect justice
Whitening white snow, so bright
I read the thermometer: a hair above
Forty below.

Can't talk, arctic air
Scorching my throat. But how
Immense this high tension
System is! With somewhere, we know,
A weak connection fraying
Out there.

It will go. Flare, stink
Of burnt metal, and lights
Out. Absolute zero
Bursts in, implosion—a sudden suck.
No cry. Air will freeze
Solid, sound will freeze
Solid, every word
Stuck on a still wave. The tapes
Heaped in a tangle, unplayable.

The moon. Close ornate cornice
In upper foreground, to dramatize
Our photo's perspective, a still sweep
To absolute everywhere. Thinking: tonight
Or soon. Everything's trite or classical
And I can't draw the line. Stiff,
Almost solid, staring with frozen eyes.

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This Decoration

Blue light, morning
glory color, driven
through green fir boughs,

bright as crow-caw
on the next to last day
of October. You've given

me this decoration
made from dried pasted
flowers inside the cap

of a cottage cheese
carton. Beautiful
flowers, unrecognizable

flowers, at which I stare
with a blue-green feeling,
delighted and ignorant,

until you tell me you
made them up. One
is scales from a pine cone

flattened, with a tuft
of silverrod seedfluff
in the center. Another

from a dried panicle
of millet with petals
of mapleseed. Now

I see burrs, bark, a
snip of duck feather. How
exquisite, flowers

of imagination from this
real world, made and given
for lovingkindness. I

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go out, wordless, walking
the stubble rows; and here,
high, comes this black

crow, above the furrows
high and straight, flapping,
as if from a great

distance, from eternity.
Caw caw, loudly; and back,
from beyond the firs, comes

the answer, *caw,* way off, far,
although near too, and wordless,
as real things always are.

Too Tenuous

Thirty yards apart, they face
not each other
but both in the same direction,
and yet could not be more together,
these sandhill cranes near Ruby Lake, Nevada,
two russet paleographic curves, slender
Chinese brushstrokes among tan reeds—
the composed and oriental splendor
of this world. Bo, my son,
you grow as this grows rarer.
We know what the cranes face. Already
I am a collector
of such precious fragments and you will become
perhaps a connoisseur, driven in love and wonder
to pedantry. Turn away, dear Bo.
Love will not keep in such a dwindled order
too tenuous to know.

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Rimrock, Where It Is

Ruined, time ruined, all these once good things.
The structure of many rooms built in the sun,

a refuge from sun; but its parts have gone
wandering, there down the hillside in flowers.

A few doorways remain, arched gently, open
to a white-hot sky, but through them the spirits

long since ceased to pass. Ladders mount the walls
rung by rung to nowhere. The city of desolation,

creviced for the scorpion, is pierced everywhere
by sun, whose mindless immitigable command

beats down with the same force as when its liege folk
listened: generate, generate. Only scorpions hear,

the female eating the male's head while they couple.
Nearby in a refuge of poured concrete and glass

a small woman, small as a girl, black with time,
lies and lies, always raising her head, her charred face,

always raising her knees in a mock of childbirth,
always opening her mouth that is gagged with dust,

always screaming. It reverberates, wave on wave,
the desert's pulse. And the blind albino

fish, relic of a once vast species, that swims
in the lake at the bottom of the deepest cave

in Arizona, in darkness or in glittering rays
of flashlights, goes round and round and round.

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ROGER HOBDELL

The Frontiers of Summer

Long after the lambent light was spent
I went out to dig in the old sand the forest

Gates locked till dawn a man arrives with a lantern
hitting a few creatures with the small beam

Golden carp breathed in their pond I looked for my place
on the path assailed by vegetation

The jar ready for the candle weighted with my pick I tried again
the lines of a carol from childhood

I now came into A. the streets oppressively silent
but since my last visit probably unchanged

The cupid fountain stilled at length the courtyard
lush and overgrown her promise had stayed

Under a large frond I would rest drink her dark cognac
awaiting a day of undiminished heat

My search was revived passage birds up tasting the breeze
Spice Islands where they came from

Too dark for the guide book I tried the east gate of A.
drawn by the smells of baking bread

Spot was padding in front through the sighs
of the pleasure quarter I had bitten a peach

A nanny fled to the shadows a postman refused my pleas
for a letter a slug slid off my boot

Dawn a little girl in a tattered petticoat hit me with a clod
ran across the road and smiled

Kitchen smoke touched the garden a fritillary bending
a grass of last year my shovel rang out

The parlour still dark a faded bridesmaid leant against
a carriage clock the pantry deep in the cellar

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Old vows confused me the milk threatening to turn
in the storm and my thirst so far unquenched

Falling on a raggedy doll I placed on her changeless lips
a wet kiss put my hand in her blouse

Up the steep stairs I found her an ancient bracelet
her knickers holding a crumpled ticket

I saw in the loft through binoculars full of opera dust
a fetish brought from the tropics

The hooter went at the mine enjoying perhaps too much the mist
I cast in my bags for the sextant

Cordoned-off the site lay ahead the dog burying his morsel
believing we could find the orchard again

The parapet kept me on the bridge though my face was
in the waves and in the water that was gone

The doll strapped to my shoulder for one straw hat
two heads trying to recall a moment

A stream falling from my member I wrote our position
on a sheet I put with care in the file

Villagers drawn to the pump stared at my progress
across the square as I checked every detail

The cloister was deserted the carving each year less distinct
ruining my hopes for accuracy

The forestry office shut a rumour of massive felling
came from a blind man with a vicious dog

Ah school holidays with a saw in my hand
I stumbled through Madame's frail ballet class

In the cloakroom a tear in the pinafore revealed
a heap of sweaty worn-out tunics

The pianist took off his coat firm limbs opening at the bar
disturbed the acrid cloud of my Navy-cut

Only a vest would remain two dancing globules
the last sunlit secret soft young melon

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In her satin Madame screamed the girl turned back
to the mirror breathless trying not to cough

Shutting the door with a bang I gazed at the stolen figurine
which I smothered with ink and lipstick

Hearing now a garage from the museum garden
I cunningly changed into my greasy dungarees

A car was revving loudly as the petrol splashed
in the dusty can labelled rose fertilizer

A mechanic thumping an object about the storeroom
I decided to crush some olives for oil instead

I combed the doll's hair snatching from oblivion the old
ringlet style she was a fashionable woman now

Afternoon softness the quay sinking into the river
laughing girls adrift in needle-boats

Heat and fatigue from stowing my bags stopped me
speaking to the gipsy woman camped on the deck

Her languid stories filled my empty reverie she had pinned
wild heather all over my jacket

With her moans of delight echoing through the steamer
she slobbered kisses on my senseless forehead

The waves excited by the craft were rippling the lily-pads
as she gave me a briar pipe on a string

Glistening lollipops beat against the striped deck-chairs
I had set up my puppet-show

With sesame seeds a suntanned sailor fed his beautiful parrot
too soon the flimsy curtain fell

Gravel clung to the skirt of the doll which I slid down
the gangway to the long shadows ashore

A broken egg lay on the cobbles I balanced my equipment on
a child's pram found in the coal yard

Old men played boule from a rickety wooden clock tower I
dropped a feather to the dark sand below

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Spot gave up chasing the wasps nesting on the pendulum
which my ruler was too short to measure

The bicycle lamp failed a flake of red paint fell from the vault
where the builder's name was illegible

Dusk I splinted in a crumbling bower a dying pigeon
across the doll's back unable to see the injury

Precious moments of the murk a mermaid pouring from the
breast the pram covered with a parasol

Stuck in a rhododendron clump I felt
in my hospital kit for the bandage scissors

Part of my jacket was left in the blooms the falling
petal I caught kept fresh in my specimen box

In the ruined villa Lampon my assistant nearly finished
would be clutching the first records

By the flare of my burning sleeping-bag I primed the little
generator siphoning petrol from the old can

A gargoyle held in my spotlight I started through
the gate of C. on the trail of the antiquities

The doorman checked my ticket completing the night-register
a single may bug on the garden passage

Ham well-cured a man laden departing had left me a place
at the table under the flowering chestnuts

Candles burned steadily a waitress gave me
the forest mushrooms present of a summer night

Steam rising from the horses tied to the trees made the moon
shimmer far away my hand held the fruit

Whoa I whispered climbing with the doll through the heavy
foliage searching for the lights of A.

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JOSEPH BENNETT

A Greek Island

The jeweled frog is always at the gate,
Though made of greenest jasper,
And a ruby rises for each wart.
His smile is behind each tree of jade, hung with orient pearl,
And in each cup of emerald offered to his prisoner.
She fears, for behind each sculptured hill of crystal
His smile awaits, and everything she sees, he has made;
Each sapphire boulder, each rivulet of quartz; and the nodding
Mechanically-operated flowers, and he peers,
A Cyclops behind the hills, giant at his works.
Often absent, almost invisible, he is always there.
She cannot escape, for all is arranged, as far as she can see;
The pagoda boats, the ceremonial lakes;
She hides (but it is useless) behind the turquoise hills.
His smile is everywhere; invisible;
He has made the world her garden.
And never insists on sexual intercourse, knowing her tastes.
Everything she sees
Or touches with her tongue, or drinks; he is;
The perfume in each quartz-tinged flower.
She lies on her pillow, alone, inhaling gossamer sounds
From invisible tinkling microphones, hearing rivulets and brooks,
Keyboards and strings, piped, inhaled, breathed,
Delicate, selected from the centuries before
Like such of the furniture which is not made of agate or amethyst.
He does not like wooden objects.
No mirrors are needed; for what would she see?
All the park is watered with quartz,
And mirrors would conceal himself
Replenishing the works around her.
Her very closet so cunning and intricate,
Its mechanism delicate and silent,

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Its inlay work of tortoise and of lapis
Devised by his intricate hand and mind.
She cannot escape him in the gentle hush of waters beneath her,
In the synthetic silk-spun tissues, of every pastel on a rainbow color-card,
Which float diaphanous down the opal pipes to a dark-ink sea.
There are no fireplaces, or fires to reflect, or mantels to reflect upon.
Her paradise extends, floating on its sea; it moves with her.
He becomes more invisible, not even a voice,
Realizing her distress.
But how can she escape a trap which reforms
And modulates with mood, how cunningly he contrives
The pathways through her boredom. She has only to think,
And the thing appears, exhausted and crystallized, artificially scented
Like the fruits that hang down heavy from the real-jade trees
To dash themselves at her teeth, so she is overcome with sugar.
The crystal rivulets turn to topaz
And she forgets the days he sought her sex.
Her tourneys, and the jeweled chessmen that she moved through her domains,
Idly once, through undulant perspectives,
Seem now to march in formal squares, through pavings of ruby and obsidian.
She should take her knight to queen's pawn four,
Her bishop to the square, the castle is a diamond rook.
Godless, she perambulates in cross-hatched heaven
And thinks
How even serpents, enameled and with ruby tongues,
Are goldsmith's art, devised and placed on trees,
And cut-stone birds to sing,
And crystal fruits to reach her hand
That seem to crush her mouth;
She bites and cannot fall;
There is no outer gate to paradise.

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DAVID PAUL

A Young, Late Pharaoh

The imperial cobra suspends
Its course on the impassive brows:
Where the king sits his dark house
Still rises and surrounds.

Floor to a pyramid of rays,
World is the multiple of one
Evading addition or deduction.
The god's excluding gaze

Watches in the red-eyed jackal
Presiding over darkness,
A moon-high lady sniffing a lotus,
Or a sun-haunting falcon.

Locked in a rainless dream
Donated by river and sun,
We draw from across the Great-Green
Wonderers at our wisdom.

Our women possess the eternal *chic,*
We are powerful we hope being rich.
Beyond his speculating reach
We can ignore the inquisitive Greek.

Mystery's demand is ritual.
Slaves to that absolute,
Worshipping star, man, brute
—Manifest, many, same—we still

Stare at our puzzled faith,
Voluptuous and strict:
No reality none but the fixed
Image. It is and escapes death.

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STEPHEN SANDY

Waiting for the Warden

A doe like a brown empress
sitting at twilight there
in the snow watches the hounds gathering
  like retainers
slowly tracking the rise
bearing the gifts of blood
in their eyes.

Against sun falling past locust saplings
how serenely the doe looks out
  down the snowfield
chalked with dusk's blue!
Her shoulder is broken,

  no pain: or
there is none I can see.

A bronze stillness letting death in
the unknown the fearful
the black shapes of hunters and dogs
  become the known
holding no fear longer
slowly approaching the cloud
one imagines before her eyes there
as breaths in the cold air.

I cannot tell how she accepted death
how beautiful
the long headlights of the warden's car
great tunnels through the dark and stillness.

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STEPHEN FARBER

Melodramatic Truths

"I'M NOT VERY INTERESTED in movies with plots," the young story editor at Warner Brothers told me recently, then apologizing a little, "I guess that's a terrible thing for a story editor to admit." But it was certainly a fashionable observation from one of the "new" Hollywood executives. He probably could have referred to the key European films during the last ten years—*Breathless, L'Avventura, Last Year at Marienbad, Jules and Jim, 8½*—that introduced original non-narrative, non-linear films to American audiences and stimulated a new awareness of what film might attempt and accomplish. The success of *Blow-up* in America in 1966 proved that a movie without conventional plot resolution—a movie that, in fact, deliberately *defied* plot expectations—could become a major mass audience hit; and soon American moviemakers too, primed on McLuhan, began exploring the non-plot movie. Many of the American films that have been hailed as most important during the last couple of years—*Point Blank, Easy Rider, Alice's Restaurant, Medium Cool, MASH, Catch 22*—do not have orthodox plots, and they are constructed with other aims in mind than telling a story. Looking back at important movies of the past, what interests us is almost always something *apart from* plot—unusual thematic concerns, characters, camerawork, use of color, *mise en scène*. Plot has most often been the impediment to cinematic art, the element that held the talented director down and had to be transcended. In Hitchcock's films all those foolishly contrived and sometimes fanciful plots simply obscure the director's oddly humorous characters and his oblique, perverse, morbid insights into human obsessions. Plot enables him to *evade* his responsibilities as an artist.

The number of movies in which a carefully structured plot is integral to the meaning of the film would certainly be very small. Truffaut's homage to Hitchcock, *The Bride Wore Black,* has several splendid minor characterizations, some lovely, tender black comic moments, but the film is irritating because the plot is so contrived and banal, so methodically and laboriously distended. Even Bergman has run afoul of plot in his interesting but unsuccessful recent film, *The Passion of Anna.* In his last several films Bergman has used a variety of quasi-Brechtian devices to break the viewer's identification with the action; in *The Passion of Anna* he interrupts the film at several points for informal interviews with the actors who play the four leading roles. Yet in spite of this gesture toward modernity, the film is practically undone by its creaky, old-fashioned plot. It is the hero's

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unlikely discovery of Anna's letter at the opening that leads directly to the climactic scene in which he uses the information he picked up in that letter to wound Anna and destroy her fantasy of a happy marriage. The film does not effectively communicate its themes of self-deception and inhumanity through fully-realized characterizations and evocative imagery, as Bergman has done in other recent films; here he depends on a convenient bit of plotting for an emotional thunderbolt, and since the device is, from the very beginning, so transparent, so predictable on a mechanical—but not a human—level, the film seems a rather cold, efficient exercise, not the searing psychological study many have taken it for.

If awkward plot manipulation can cripple a supreme film artist like Bergman, it is appalling to see what happens when plot is misused by much smaller talents. The new, highly-praised, highly-charged, incredibly confused film *Joe* seems to move sophisticated audiences even though it is built on coincidences and contrivances that TV soap opera fans would blush at. At the start of the film Bill Compton, a wealthy New York advertising executive, accidentally kills his hippie daughter's junkie lover in a squalid East Village apartment. In a bar afterwards he happens to meet Joe, the hardhat factory worker, and the two are drawn together because of Bill's crime. Up to this point we may be willing to ignore plausibility for the sake of an intriguing premise—the opportunity to study the relationship between two men at opposite ends of the social spectrum who are united by their fear and hatred of youth; but then the coincidences really get out of hand. Compton's daughter, recovering in the hospital from a bad speed trip, happens to escape, arrive home, fall asleep in the hallway, and awaken just in time to hear her father acknowledge the murder of her lover. This scene—which has no conceivable purpose or validity except to enable the girl to overhear the crucial information—sets in motion the extremely melodramatic finale: She leaves home, and Bill and Joe, searching the Village for her, meet up with some hippies who rob them; the two men follow the hippies out to a commune in the country, and reluctantly at first, then increasingly relieved, Bill Compton helps Joe to shoot them down. As one of the hippie girls begins to run away, Bill shoots her in the back; mortally wounded, she turns around and he recognizes—his daughter! *Joe* was made on a low budget, but I don't think that excuses the shoddy, lurid writing. (In technical areas, where we might be willing to overlook clumsiness, the film is remarkably sharp and proficient.) Admittedly, the film is directed with great melodramatic flair, and moment by moment, the details of dialogue and setting are convincing; it may also be that audiences accept the overwrought plot because it satisfies their paranoid fantasies, but it is astonishing that they take this dumb, irresponsible potboiler as a serious statement about contemporary American culture, the Generation Gap, and the violence of the Establishment.

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Clearly no one cares about plot logic any more—not the film-makers who use plot manipulations so carelessly, not the audiences who accept any contrivance for the sake of a quick thrill.

Plot seems to many film-makers today a corruption of art, and even more importantly, a corruption of truth. And a movie like *Joe* would certainly tend to support that charge. To treat these urgent questions of antagonism between the generations as a subject for sensational melodrama, to use outrageous plot contrivances in order to exploit a contemporary audience's fears about very real menaces seems more than aesthetically reprehensible; it seems morally reprehensible. And I think some revulsion of this kind lies behind the repudiation of such cheap plot manipulation by our most serious film-makers. The rise of interest in documentaries and nonfiction in all the media clearly signals a greater desire for truth stripped of the organization and resolutions of drama. And non-documentary cinema is under intensive revaluation too: Many students of film now believe that film is closer in form to music or painting or lyric poetry than to dramatic fiction, and particularly the novel, as everyone used to assume. Regardless of this, people have always been drawn to movies because they enjoy stories; one of the pleasures of moviegoing is a rational one—the pleasure of solving a puzzle, of following an action to its logical conclusion. It is too limiting to suggest that movies are only successful when they are fragmented, haphazard, and lyrical. The dramatic possibilities of the medium can still be tapped in a very rich way by film-makers who respect plot and understand its demands.

All of this is by way of introduction to Claude Chabrol's *This Man Must Die,* a murder mystery, a revenge story, a work of serious art, and a triumphant reminder of the fact that films *can* be enhanced by their plots. Chabrol is an admirer of Hitchcock, whom he sees as a moralist as well as an entertainer; *This Man Must Die* is a brilliant illustration of what Hitchcock's own movies rarely represent—the carefully-plotted suspense film as the frame for a complex and profound moral study.

Most obviously, I suppose, the reason the plot of this movie seems integral is that the film is *about* the moral dimensions of plot, calculation, rational and artistic design as a way of dealing with human experience. At the start of the film a child is killed in a hit-and-run accident. His father, Charles Thenier, sets out to track down the killer and avenge his son's death. His life is ordered around this one overriding obsession, and he plots his revenge with a cool, leisurely, methodical fury. And as the film continues, though we are always tantalized by the rational brilliance with which Charles operates, we are increasingly chilled by his single-minded ruthlessness.

Charles is a writer, an intellectual, and he sees life with a piercing, merciless aesthetic distance. In a few moments at the beginning Chabrol suggests his fastidiousness by showing us his home; the dom-

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inant impression is miniature boats and art objects sealed in cabinets, behind glass. Very early, in a subtly disquieting scene, Charles sets up a movie screen in his livingroom and replays his memories of life with his son—all completely silent, except for the whirr of the projector, memory images frozen and isolated from the flush of real feeling and experience. This sequence sets an important motif for the film by twisting a sentimental cliche into something colder and more ominous: Charles is not simply wallowing in nostalgia; he is *using* these tender home movies to stimulate his rage, strengthen his resolve to murder.

When the police inspectors who have been investigating the accident come to speak with Charles, he conducts almost a Socratic dialogue with himself and with them, asking rhetorical questions and answering them, examining the hypothesis of a second accident to hide the evidence of the first, then deductively arriving at the conclusion that the murderer owns a garage. He sees the case in the form of a classic detective novel, and he enjoys imagining himself as a master sleuth, a provincial Sherlock Holmes.

As he continues his quest, with greater and greater success, his resolve never falters, his aesthetic delight in the progress of his revenge never abates. When he meets the actress who was in the hit-and-run car, he coldly plots her seduction, writing in his diary about his plans only moments before she arrives for a tryst. Ignorant of his purpose, she takes him to the home of her brother-in-law, the murderer of his son, but Charles delays his revenge, allowing his plot to ripen slowly and beautifully. Entering his room in the house, he surveys the melange of styles of the art objects on the wall—little Hummel figurines, modern abstract paintings, a cross, a traditional tapestry—and, licking his lips over the bad taste of his host and hostess, he exclaims, "I have never seen such crap!" And when he meets the murderer, his aesthetic responses are once again gratified. Paul is a coarse bourgeois materialist, a vicious husband and father; Charles calls him a *caricature* of a perfectly evil man, as if acknowledging the pleasure he takes in seeing life imitate art.

The key to the film—to its moral concerns as well as to its ingenious plot—is the diary that Charles keeps, in which he catalogues his thoughts and details his plans. At first glance the diary would appear to be the most artless expression of Charles's grief, a personal testament, a record of his deepest feelings. But Charles *uses* the diary, as he used the home movies of his son, in more calculated ways. By writing down all of his thoughts, he means to objectify his grief, dissociate himself from it so that he has his emotions under firm control. Should he ever lose control of himself for a moment—for example, when Helene discovers one of his son's stuffed animals and makes fun of him—he analyzes his outburst in the diary with an icy clinical rigor, trying to master his residual vulnerabilities; through this self-analysis he makes himself a more efficient murderer, steeling

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himself against emotion. But if the diary—ordinarily regarded as the repository of deepest, most intimate feeling—is perverted by Charles to a kind of case book, a rational plan of action, it has an even more diabolical purpose. The diary is not simply the record of Charles's murder plot, it is also a brilliant, integral part of that plot. For Charles intends the diary to be discovered by his potential victim—as it eventually is. He hopes the discovery of the diary will give Paul a false confidence that will make him careless; and looking even further ahead, Charles expects that the clear self-incrimination contained in the diary will eventually convince the police that he would never have murdered a man who knew of his intentions. When Paul is poisoned, his lawyer turns the diary over to the chief of police, who questions Charles; Charles's first comment is, "I hope you appreciated my style."

And yet in spite of his precautions, the precision of Charles's plan is subverted by freak accidents, and by traces of feeling that cannot be completely stifled. Charles himself, early in the film, asserts his belief in the existence of chance, and he is confident that chance will work in his favor. At the start this is true; just when his search seems most hopeless, he accidentally comes upon the same farmhouse where the hit-and-run car stopped right after the accident. But as he gets more deeply embroiled, he finds the element of the unpredictable working more often to complicate his scheme. His liaison with Helene, though kept under tight control, does set up the possibility for emotional involvement.

But it is when he meets the hit-and-run driver's teenage son that his scheme is most seriously threatened by a human relationship more demanding than he can guess. Charles sees in Philippe—a sensitive, brooding, intellectual boy—traces of his own son, and he is drawn into a tender attachment to the boy almost in spite of himself. In one exquisite scene Charles discusses *The Iliad* with Philippe, with a great teacher's patience and commitment demonstrating the lyricism and originality that Homer brings to his descriptions of death. The boy responds to what Charles is saying about the artist's gift for transforming the horror of human experience into lasting beauty—their sensitivity to aesthetic distinctions draws them together. The identification between them has grown unusually strong: Philippe confesses that he wishes Charles could take the place of his own father; and with a kind of clairvoyance, he instinctively understands that Charles has come there to kill his father, and he urges him on to it with a directness that upsets Charles's cool.

When Paul is poisoned and Charles is arrested—the police inspector having guessed his ingenious plot—Philippe unexpectedly enters and confesses that he is guilty of the crime. Chabrol never lets us know for certain whether he is telling the truth, but I think we are meant to take the confession literally; and when Charles himself writes

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a confession to the murder in the very last scene, that is probably only his way of saving Philippe from death. But this final ambiguity is crucial; Chabrol insists on one insoluble puzzle, one unfathomable secret—the proof that, no matter how carefully and methodically we may design our lives, a last mystery remains, a defiance of our designs, opaque and impenetrable forever.

Perhaps because he refuses to allow us the omniscient point of view provided by most mystery films, Chabrol convinces us that, even though his film has a tight, conventional plot, it retains something of the open-endedness of life, always eluding the bounds of artistic design. Still, it is the plot of this movie that illuminates its moral concerns, helps Chabrol to treat large questions about innocence and guilt that most film-makers would be terrified to broach. *This Man Must Die* deals with some of the simplest and most forbidding questions of human experience: Does one have the right to influence another human being to kill? Is it possible to be untainted by the contemplation and commission of murder? What are the deepest moral implications of the Biblical principle "An eye for an eye"? Just writing those questions makes me a little queasy, but Chabrol confronts them without flinching and brings to them a sense of urgency. A film about universal moral questions needs some stylization, some distancing, some abstraction, which the artifice of the murder plot helps to provide, enabling us to contemplate these life-and-death matters at one or two removes from our experience. The plot helps to focus for us the problem of Charles's self-absorption, the cold, life-denying precision with which he executes his revenge. And by making us share his point of view, and his relish in reason, discipline, art, then leading us to a final horrified recognition of all that may be sacrificed by a denial of emotional involvement with others, the film implicates us in its moral drama.

The film opens with the death of a child, and moves in a kind of circle to the point where it began—the destruction of the life of another child. As Charles himself says, "A man kills a child, and his own son kills him." Charles's revenge has a perfect symmetry, a geometrical precision—and a ghastly, unpredictable result. Charles may not be literally guilty of the murder of Paul, but it is his influence on Philippe that we are forced to contemplate with horror. Like Charles's own son, Philippe is fundamentally innocent, open to any kind of experience; the breadth of his passion makes him capable of parricide, and he is also capable of a completely generous and noble love, the courage to sacrifice his life for another. Those two extremes are riveting—the child, still-unformed, unfinished, in search of direction, has the capacity to do anything, and by dramatizing the way in which Charles's single-minded obsession has encouraged him to kill, the film makes us consider the significance of moral influence, and the sobering responsibility a man has for the lives of those around him.

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We are appalled by what Charles has done, as he is appalled. But Philippe's sacrifice reawakens his own love; in a last resurgence of feeling, of humanity, he sacrifices himself for the boy, and exiles himself from society. And in the final shot of the film—his boat lost on the horizon, overwhelmed by the impassivity, the indifference of the sea—the image of solitude and exile takes on a genuinely tragic intensity. The film does not ignore the complexity of moral evaluations, but finally, in that grand classical conclusion, Chabrol—with supreme compassion but moral and aesthetic clarity—judges Charles guilty, irrevocably beyond the pale of human society.

The conventional picture of Chabrol—much too narrow, I now believe—is as a technician, an ironist, a chic social commentator. And *This Man Must Die* reveals those gifts in abundance. The sense of social observation is particularly stunning in the scenes at Paul's home in Brittany, where Chabrol characterizes and distinguishes a large number of people with breathtaking wit and economy. The dinner scene, in which Paul reads a corny poem he discovered in his dilettantish wife's room, to the great amusement of himself and his mother, the mortification of his wife and his son, and the confused embarrassment of the other guests, is a scene of social comedy that makes one turn to literature—to Jane Austen, perhaps—to find a suitable comparison. And yet the scene, though a brilliant set-piece, is absolutely integral to the film. It contains, in microcosm, the film's main theme—the disparity between aesthetic and human responses, the emotional vulnerabilities that may be ignored by a valid but merciless aesthetic judgment. In this scene, as in all of the film, the performances are natural and beautifully controlled. There is a good deal more to praise in the film; I especially admire the characterization of the bourgeois monster Paul (and Jean Yanne's performance in the role). Chabrol refuses to allow us to feel superior to him; though we are revolted by his vulgarity, we are also forced to see that his hardheaded, cruelly direct approach to life has its own measure of honesty and vitality.

Before seeing this film I had shared the prevailing critical impatience with Chabrol's cool, fashionable cynicism, but I probably was not familiar with enough of his films. *This Man Must Die* reestablishes Chabrol's importance in world cinema and makes an intense, sympathetic review of his career absolutely mandatory for anyone who is serious about movies. But while the film should stimulate a revaluation of Chabrol, it is also particularly instructive at this time because it makes us revaluate the relationship that plot can have to the highest form of film art. The meticulously-fashioned mystery plot of *This Man Must Die* introduces and highlights an absorbing and devastating morality play that is, in addition, the richest film experience of the year.

Another vital, interesting, though very special use of plot as an

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instrument of imaginative truth can be seen in Ossie Davis' misunderstood, underrated *Cotton Comes to Harlem*. At a Back-to-Africa rally in Harlem $87,000 raised by a very slick, shifty black minister and supposedly intended to send poor blacks back to Africa is stolen by a gang of masked gunmen; two very cool black detectives, Coffin Ed Johnson and Gravedigger Jones, set out to recover the money, and find themselves involved in one of the most outrageous, complicated, and violent plots in the gangster movie repertory. Yet the absurd, convoluted plot is not, as some critics have objected, a distraction from the film's attempts at social criticism; the plot helps us to get our bearings, helps to identify the quality of life in Harlem—that is, the plot is an inherent part of the film's social criticism.

To middle-class whites part of the interest of the movie is its exoticism; it absorbs us in a completely unfamiliar world, a no-man's-land New York—a city of junk collectors who live right on the river, honkies in the woodpile (literally as well as figuratively), striptease at the Apollo, soul food kitchens, revival halls, jails with armor plating. And with true cheek, the film treats this grim, squalid setting as the backdrop for madcap farce and surrealistic cartoon violence—without disclaimers, without apologies. Davis gives us some sense of the real corruptions and problems of the ghetto—the scheme to cheat the poor out of their savings by promising them a nirvana in Africa, the threat of riots on the streets. Like the Harlem we read about in the newspapers, this is a city of extraordinarily complex relationships among a variety of warring factions—black militants, Muslims, con men, the easily gulled, the homeless, the down-and-out, the Mafia, the police. But in the film everything is exaggerated, stylized, to turn this macabre everyday world into something wild and fantastical. The heist and car chase at the start are drawn in flamboyant black comic images—gunshots blasting across town as the cars careen around corners and around people, a junkie wandering out into the street, weaving among the cars with a crazy dancer's precision, another man hit and tossed sky high, the detectives landing in a crate of watermelons. This sequence sets an extravagant, artificial tone: *Cotton Comes to Harlem* uses a gangster plot and the colorful fantasy violence of a James Bond movie to create a kind of metaphor —a pop art poetic metaphor—for the chaos of day-to-day life in Harlem. The satire may be outrageous, but it is telling; to the people on the streets of Harlem, violence is the primary fact of life, and Davis boldly acknowledges the exhilaration to be found in violence that is everywhere taken for granted. During the grotesque chase and shootout at the start, the blacks go on about their business cheerfully: As a white salesman looks around, flabbergasted, a black female impersonator removes a handful of fur coats from his cart. A pickpocket, having trouble locating a woman's wallet, cuts a hole in her skirt and pulls it from her garter; a moment later he is splattered by one of the cars.

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Ossie Davis obviously was not satisfied with what was being said about the ghetto in naturalistic plays and movies like *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Pawnbroker,* and he decided the most appropriate imagery for representing the true spirit of the ghetto could only be found in art, in one of the most sadistic and extravagantly bizarre genres—the gangster movie. And he brings off the metaphor: The elaborate network of hypocrisy, doublecross, blackmail, and violence around which his film is structured gives us a thrilling, abrasive picture of the true complexity and madness of urban ghetto life as no one else has dared to picture it; this may be a crazy, funny film, but it is a ferocious one as well, extreme and very bitter in its point of view.

As in *This Man Must Die,* the plot of the movie is especially important as a way of defining the film's unusual moral perspective. The outrageous, convoluted melodrama helps to dislocate us, encouraging us to abandon our conventional, fastidious liberal moral sense and plunge into a mad new world where a moral position must be burned out of the violence and degradation of life as it is actually lived. What do liberal sermons against violence have to do with the desperate struggle for survival, the routine brutality of Harlem? What would be the meaning of conventional police ethics in bedlam, where the people in authority cooperate with the Mafia and endorse the corruption of the honey-tongued reverend in order to stave off the threat of terrorism by the extremists? Where the coalitions of forces are so complex, and the possibility of reform so remote, only radical methods can possibly cope with the situation. The moral values we bring with us are irrelevant in Ossie Davis' Harlem, and the film involves us in framing new, pertinent, iconoclastic values that can serve to make the disorder of this nightmare city a little more manageable.

Most particularly, the film asks us to join in the evaluation of Coffin Ed and Gravedigger, the two brutal, heretical detectives who have almost the entire responsibility of keeping Harlem from annihilation. From the start of the film the two cops are defined in fantastic, not realistic terms; their superiority is comically implied when they effortlessly catch a pickpocket at work in a mob of people, throw a troublesome militant (literally) skyhigh, and screech into a wild car chase that takes them over half the city. From then on almost everything that Coffin Ed and Gravedigger do is unorthodox and unethical—they beat people up quite casually, allow white and black gangster-rivals to shoot each other down, prevent a riot by setting loose several crates of chickens, let the reverend's girl friend out of jail in disguise so that she can lead them to his hidingplace, blackmail the Mafia to put up the $87,000 stolen from the poor blacks.

We may have qualms about accepting all of this—and the film makes no attempt to whitewash their violence or their peculiar brand of bigotry—but we are led to respect their point of view and their

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effort to bring a measure of order and sanity to their chaotic corner of the city. They are not impartial; as they say, their job is to protect blacks from whites and even, when necessary, from their fellow blacks. They resent Reverend O'Malley because of the calculating way in which he exploits the dreams and frustrations of his own people. Their approach is cool and pragmatic—they have *no* absolute moral principles, they weigh the alternatives and do what must be done, making the necessary compromises to bring the greatest measure of justice to a stinking, impure world. Clearly they are almost-mythical figures, Supercops, but Ossie Davis labels them as such; his point, expressed with stinging irony, is that only their grand bravura style might keep Harlem from exploding. The film as a whole could be called a contemporary, gritty, mock heroic poem, imaginatively removed from life, but like all the best imaginative visions, illuminating a portion of the truth that more prosaic minds could never quite perceive.

I think the primary reason that we are willing to accept the elaborate, tricky plots in *This Man Must Die* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem,* different as the films are in style and point of view, is that both contain a rigorous moral vision, a framework that arranges subtle and difficult moral distinctions with clarity and ease. And this moral framework finds a complement in the logical structuring of the plot. Though it is conceived in comic and fantastic terms, *Cotton Comes to Harlem,* like *This Man Must Die,* is a morality play, in which we can arrange the various characters on a moral scale and evaluate them—from the villainous Deke O'Malley, charming, suave, stylish, pious, totally hypocritical and selfishly corrupt, to the two superheroes, who use corrupt methods too, but only in pursuit of the most honorable settlement for their people. The film may not accept conventional morality, but it has strong moral *concern.*

This is the crucial point that distinguishes these films from *Joe,* whose plot is no more outrageous, certainly, than the plot in *Cotton Comes to Harlem,* but which nevertheless seems offensively contrived and cheaply manipulative. *Joe* might do a smoother job of glossing over some of its more unlikely coincidences—it might have placed Bill Compton's daughter with that group of commune hippies sometime before the climactic scene—and it would still seem impossibly loaded. One problem with this kind of film is that a contemporary audience brings very highly-charged feelings of its own to subjects like teenage drug addiction, generational tensions, and the violence of the silent majority; so without a moral vision of almost superhuman clarity, it will inevitably be difficult to know where the film-makers mean to assign value. The writer and director of *Joe,* Norman Wexler and John Avildsen, unfortunately, are only human bunglers. In the world of *Joe* moral distinctions are *impossible* to make—the attitudes of the film-makers are so confused and con-

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tradictory, so poorly thought out that only someone with very strong preconceptions could make sense of the film. Unthinking young people laugh at Joe's hardhat prejudices and moan with masochistic self-pity when the hippies are slaughtered at the end; they read the film as a devastating indictment of the silent majority. Yet members of that silent majority, I have been told, laugh along *with* Joe, applaud what he says and even cheer the final murders. Clearly something is haywire.

I don't think it was the film's intention, but it's interesting that all the way through, the hippies are presented in unsympathetic terms, as if through the eyes of Joe himself—at best, lost, pathetic, inane, helplessly addicted to drugs, and at worst, ruthless and callous and thieving. At the end Joe urges Bill to join him in massacring the young, exclaiming, "They shit on everything," and since we have no evidence from the film itself to challenge what Joe says—no *suggestion* of anything positive or meaningful about the youth movement —we are in a very uncomfortable position. To add to the confusion, Joe himself is clearly a caricatured figure, with his American flag and gun collection in the basement, but he is the *only* character in the film with any vitality at all, the only figure with more than one dimension. And that is why, as the film progresses, the audience that begins as hostile and contemptuous of Joe, comes to like him; in this vacuum, where everyone else is presented as either vapid (Bill Compton and his daughter) or vicious (the hippies), Joe inevitably commands stage center and begins to stir our sympathy. There is absolutely nothing or no one to place him against. So although the film may have been meant to horrify us by the spectre of old battling young, parents gunning down their children, it inadvertently comes out at almost the opposite point—as a bewildered *justification* of the murder of youth.

Like *This Man Must Die, Joe* is meant to move in a very symmetrical way from Bill's accidental murder of his daughter's lover to his accidental murder of his daughter herself. And it might have taken on a sense of tragic irony—if the film, through more ruthless characterization of Bill, had convinced us that, beneath his mask of parental concern, he really *wanted* to murder his daughter (as she accuses him at one point) and that this was morally abhorrent.

I am not trying to suggest that movies with strong moral perspectives are necessarily "better" than morally ambiguous movies. I am perfectly willing to accept a movie that dramatizes some of the complex current problems broached by *Joe*—teenage drug addiction, inter-generational violence—without pretending to offer clear moral judgments or resolutions. But I think we *must* demand that these movies be structured loosely and tentatively enough to express their doubts and ambivalences without strain. *Joe* is offensive because it tries to squeeze its confused vision of explosive social tensions into a

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rigid, artificial, melodramatic structure that seems cruelly manipulative. It is no accident that the most effective and interesting explorative films about contemporary social problems are the free form documentaries—the films of Frederick Wiseman, for example (*Law and Order, High School, Hospital*), Allan King's *Warrendale,* even Michael Wadleigh's *Woodstock*. We are living in a world that often seems to change too rapidly to permit us to construct a clear set of values for ordering an experience and our responses to it. We know at once too much and too little. So it may be perfectly understandable that movie plots have been corrupted and disavowed along with the sense of moral certainty that used to regulate respectable entertainment in this country. But one thing these films demonstrate is that a cogent moral vision need not be facile or simple-minded. Chabrol is sensitive to the tremendous difficulty of making any kind of moral judgment; but, as painful as it must be, he does make a moral commitment. The mature clarity of purpose and value that Chabrol and Ossie Davis have at their command does not seem available to many modern artists, or many modern men, and perhaps that is not entirely regrettable; still, seeing these films may make even the most skeptical among us a little envious of their control.

CHARLES W. MILLARD

Paul Klee

Among Klee's earliest works are two which serve as points of departure for the problems of line and color that were to absorb him, and which announce his early mastery of the more conventional problems of painting and drawing. One is the extremely small ink and wash drawing *Arco,* done in 1896 when Klee was 17 and executed in a traditional but not academic style that recalls the seventeenth century, particularly the drawings and prints of Callot. The other is the painted panel *Paysage de l'Aare, no. 1,* executed in 1900, which, in the abstracting simplicity of its forms and its straightforward color, brings to mind much later work by Avery or Matisse. From the security of these early accomplishments, Klee plunged into the most diverse sorts of experiments and for about twenty years allowed himself to work in various contemporary styles, including Art Nouveau and dif-

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ferent varieties of Cubism and Expressionism, while maintaining a strength and *imprimatur* entirely his own. At first, his experiments were mostly in line, either as drawings or prints, and he tried creating his drawn forms with dotted or grainy techniques, as well as developing a thin, erratic and child-like style for the 1911-1912 *Candide* illustrations. The most successful graphic works of this period, however, were not those like the *Candide* drawings which described forms wholly within the picture area, forms which performed actions among themselves, but works like the 1913 Cubist prints, in which a shaded line created areas that spread out across the picture surface. This relationship between what his line described and the total format on which he was working seems to have been conscious for Klee, for in the 1908 drawing *Zwei Tanten, Akte mit Hauben* he burned the edges of the paper after the drawing had been completed so that the figures fill the entire surface and, indeed, the paper begins to take on the contours of the drawing. The question for Klee at this point seems to have been how to use his drawing, and the nature of the relationship of a drawn line and the shape it defined to an entire composition.

Klee's color explorations during the early part of the period 1900-1920 were less daring than his explorations in line, but included painting on glass, which allowed him a certain amount of experimentation in tonal development. Some of these glass paintings were among his most successful works of the period, and in general he seems to have felt freer with more liquid media such as gouache and watercolor, and even tended to use oil like watercolor. The decisive event of these years coloristically was Klee's 1914 trip to Tunisia, where the clarity of the African light brought out his desire to work with color and probably confirmed him as a watercolorist, since light reflecting off white paper through a watercolor wash gives the medium a unique brilliance. Many of the 1914-1915 watercolors are executed without line at all, although the color areas are handled as if they were bounded by line—that is, they are geometricized and placed in clear relationships to one another. Klee seems to have been concerned not so much with the relationship of color to his entire composition, but with how to control his color, or, indeed, whether to control it at all. In the years around 1920 he most often proceeded conventionally by using color to fill in drawn areas, although frequently the color filled in bore no naturalistic relationship to what the area supposedly represented, a first step toward wholly separate use of color and line in the same composition. He seldom tried to combine line and color as had Degas, although works such as *Strahlung und Rotation* of 1924 show that he could do it successfully.

During the 1920's Klee developed this simultaneous yet independent use of color and line a great deal further, bringing it to a stage where it would shape the development of his art for the remainder of his life. He allowed his color to break through the confining barriers of

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the line and to extend itself freely as a sort of ground behind the line without reference to requirements imposed by the line. Sometimes the color was used as a variable border around the edges of the paper, and in many of the best works, such as *Fisch-physiognomisch* of 1926, it was used as an overall wash on which the drawn shapes were floated. Often, Klee seems to have felt the need for some unifying device, and he sometimes structured the wash itself in relation to the drawn shapes on top of it, but more frequently used a sort of carbon *frottage* which mediated between the drawing and the background. How this worked is well illustrated by the 1921 *Zimmerperspective mit Einwohnern* and the preparatory pencil study for it. In the study, the lines of what appears to be a strict perspective construction are brought to the edges of the paper, so that both the outer and inner limits of the construction are carefully established, the one by the paper edge, the other by the bottom of the perspective. In the watercolor, the lines of the construction no longer reach the paper edge and that, combined with the background wash, opens the composition by floating the drawing and implying that its lines are no longer the limits of an interior but the elements of a cage through which one can see into infinity. The superimposed *frottage* at once shares the material nature of the drawing—its blackness—and the amorphousness of the wash, and not only holds the two together but functions structurally to bind the entire composition to the surface of the paper.

Klee's association with the Bauhaus and his close friendship with Kandinsky seem to have led him to the next step in his development in the late 1920's. He tended to abandon his *frottage* and scumbled surfaces, and to give up the single drawn line in favor of large color areas, some of which could be read as identifiable shapes and others of which hovered between being lines and planes. He also increasingly gave up lines which described organic shapes or those which created interior picture space in favor of those which functioned purely compositionally; that is, he flattened his compositions and arranged their elements laterally across their surfaces. He experimented with technical means to emphasize surface, notably by a variety of pointillist facture and one remarkable experiment in *trompe l'oeil* which gives the effect of hundreds of small overlapping elements (*Der Kunftige*, 1933). During this time Klee also turned to more opaque color, still brilliant in hue but increasingly matte in effect, as another means of emphasizing his surfaces.

Finally, from the first appearance of his fatal illness in 1935 until his death in 1940, Klee's work was a rapid development toward a more abstract and monumental art, with clear indications of an awareness of Miró and a return to oil painting. His lines and shapes tended to break apart, turning into dissociated elements which no longer floated on their backgrounds, but became integral with them in such a way that pictorial depth ceased to be an issue. These dissociated shapes, re-

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lating to each other and to the edges of the pictures, or to an imagined lateral extension of the picture surface, and non-atmospheric color were the principal agents of Klee's transformation of his art during these years, and the elements of the artistic synthesis he finally achieved. The imagined lateral extension of these later pictures is a development of the inner expansion, the suppression of limitations, in Klee's earlier work. This expansion, which was also an expansiveness, was what he always sought, rather than new sets of limits or relationships.

To speak of Klee's development solely in terms of the important pictorial problems he confronted leaves untouched what is perhaps the most salient feature of his art—the sensibility it represents. Klee's was one of the most serious and most puzzling sensibilities of his time and, with the possible exception of Miró's, one unique in contemporary painting. Having demonstrated at the outset of his career that he could master technique, he seems to have determined to turn his back on all that was traditional and to develop consciously the appearance of awkwardness, childishness, or inability. In the presentation of his subjects and in his titles he did everything he could to play on whimsy, charm, and fantasy, frequently creating visual puns in the form of double images (*Fisch-physiognomisch,* etc.). He worried his surfaces or used palimpsest-like over-workings that gave his works the appearance of age and chance deterioration, and he seems constantly to have transformed images in relation to his internal world, altering them toward what that world told him was expressively viable. All of this attempt to make an art that looked as little as possible like art, that was in some sense a satire on art, brings Klee extremely close to much of the program of Surrealism. But the urge toward escape and revolt that characterized a great deal of Surrealist work was wholly foreign to Klee, whose art was the vehicle of a mature and serious spirit that used means similar to those of Surrealism for wholly different ends. In that difference lies the qualitative gulf that separates them. Nothing demonstrates this so well as a comparison of Klee's work with that of another Swiss who was also allied to Surrealism, Giacometti. Both shared not only the presentation of certain elements of surprise and fantasy, but what could be seen as a typically Swiss concern for *feinmalerei,* a concern that expressed itself in Giacometti's preoccupation with the well-made object and the minutely detailed surface and in Klee's miniature scale and concern for careful construction. But whereas Giacometti's is a closed world opening only into itself, a working of details for their own sake, Klee's world opens into an infinity of possibilities. Klee had the power to objectify his fantasies convincingly in a way that Giacometti and most of the Surrealists did not, as well as a power to seize and grapple with important problems which eventually transformed his art. Beginning with the representation of somewhat dissociated objects and figures, Klee first turned inward and

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created pictorial structures to unify these figments of his imagination and to justify their existence. When he later turned—literally—outward from the representation of interior structures to that of gardens and landscapes, his pictures turned outward as well, and he was able to come back to dissociated images, transformed and made viable by his acceptance of a wholly different pictorial order.

Throughout this development, even at the moment when his art became large in scale, one is constantly struck by the reticence of Klee's pictures, a reticence that shows itself not only in Klee's interest in *feinmalerei* but in the very spirit of his works. It is a spirit that places his art at a considerable removal from the character of much western painting since the Renaissance. The mainstream of post-Renaissance painting has generally sought a kind of grandeur, evidenced in the works of painters as varied as Michaelangelo, Rubens, and Pollock, which presupposes bigness—big size, big scale, big effects—and about which there is always something immediate, almost aggressive, that offers itself to the spectator. Klee's works, on the contrary, offer almost nothing by way of effect, at most a certain charm or humor that is altogether different as an experience from the immediacy one is accustomed to in western painting. They are worlds that must be entered, worlds to which one must be able to give oneself. As Klee's art became externalized, the problem of how to maintain this sensibility became more pressing; but he did maintain it, largely through the simplicity of his color and the fantasy of his draftsmanship, and his later works are among the first modern steps toward making a monumental art of what might be called a medieval or oriental sensibility. It is significant that it was at this period that Klee seems to have been most aware of Miró, whose works were also among the first to attempt such a synthesis and who, with Klee, will undoubtedly come to be seen as the forerunner of a new monumental art—an art, based on a new sensibility and new pictorial premises, that has only begun to be consistently realized during the last few years. It is a final index of Klee's stature that he was able to be faithful both to the world as he saw and felt it and to his own private sensibility, at a moment when the two must have seemed unrelated indeed.

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LUCY R. LIPPARD

Max Ernst: Passed and Pressing Tensions

> In 1930, when with a still systematic passion, I had composed my book, *The Hundred Headless Woman,* I was visited almost daily by LopLop, Bird Superior, a very special phantom of exceptional fidelity who is attached to my person. He presented me with *a heart in a cage, the sea in a cage, two petals, three leaves, a flower and a girl;* and also *the man with the black eggs* and *the man with the red cloak.* One fine autumn afternoon he told me that one day *a Lacedaemonian had been asked to go and hear a man who could imitate the nightingale perfectly.* The Lacedaemonian replied: *I have often heard the nightingale itself.* One evening he told me some jokes that were not funny. Joke—it is better not to reward a fine action at all than to reward it badly. A soldier had both arms blown off in battle. His colonel offered him half-a-crown. The soldier said to him: "I suppose, sir, you think I've only lost a pair of gloves."
>
> —Max Ernst

"LITERARY" PAINTING HAS BEEN IN MUCH DISREPUTE during the second half of the twentieth century. Formal reactions against the plastic dryness and repetitive illusionism that accompanied much "poetic" art in the 'thirties, especially Surrealism, swept with them all art of non-formal imagination. Yet from roughly 1919 to 1930, Max Ernst completed a body of work in which word and image were combined to form a genuinely "intermediary" statement. This aspect of his work, which has been over-acknowledged and under-investigated, was demonstrated once again by the Ernst retrospective at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in the fall of 1969. Particularly in work of the early 'twenties, the unexpected conjunction either of word and image, or simply of verbal/visual puns without the presence of actual writing, provides a sheer density of association comparable only to that achieved by James Joyce. Since then, it has at times foundered under figuration that is just too cute for words, but for the most part, Ernst is the only Surrealist artist to comprehend that a pun is a "fine point" (from the Italian *puntiglio*) of departure for rapid, multi-level associational games, played, like Joyce's, in and out of words, images, languages and the subconscious.

When Ernst looked back at this period from the mid-'thirties and analyzed, in one of Surrealism's major texts ("Beyond Painting," *Cahiers d'Art,* 1937), the processes of his innovations, he called them "visual alchemy" and "simple hallucination," using Rimbaud's words, and defined their mechanism as "the union of two apparently incompatible realities on an apparently unsuitable plane." He inserted, into

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what is basically an intelligent and reasonable discussion of his methods, passages of direct "illustration"; that is, the titles of his visual works rearranged into a "verbal alchemy" paralleling the effects of visualization. ("Half-grown women are carefully poisoned/ they are bedded in bottles/ the little American girl we are launching this year amuses herself by suckling sea-dogs/ the human eye is embroidered with batavic tears of curdled air and salted snow.") The "collage word" he uses as an example is *phallustrade,* defined as "an alchemical product composed of the following elements: an *autostrada,* a balustrade, and a certain amount of phallus." (It should be noted that hardly a work from this fecund period is free of the latter ingredient.) Collage itself is then defined as:

> an alchemical composition of two or more heterogeneous elements, resulting from their unexpected reconciliation owing either to a sensitive will—by means of a love of clairvoyance—towards systematic confusion and "disorder of all the senses" (Rimbaud) or to chance, or to a will favorable to chance. Chance, in the sense that Hume defined it: "The equivalent of the ignorance in which we find ourselves in relation to the real causes of events," a definition increasingly confirmed by the development of the mathematics of probability, and by the importance of this discipline in modern science and practical life: microphysics, astrophysics, agronomy, demonography, etc. Also, and this very difficult aspect of chance has been neglected by the seekers of the "laws of chance"—chance is *master of humor,* and consequently, in a far from rosy era, the one we live in, where a good deed consists of losing both arms in battle, master of humor-which-is-not-rosy, of *black humor.* An oozing relief taken from the lung of a 47-year-old smoker is another. It seems to me that collage is a hypersensitive and rigorously just instrument, like a seismograph, capable of registering the exact quantity of possible human happiness in any period. The amount of black humor contained in each authentic collage is found in inverse proportion to the possibilities of happiness (objective and subjective).

It is difficult to weigh humor in art, which is supposed to be taken so seriously, so cult-urally, that observers are unprepared or afraid to laugh. (Ad Reinhardt once said art was too serious to be taken seriously.) The best humor, of course, *is* serious, even dead serious, like Ernst's, which resembles that of the cynic Menippus, known as "the secret dog who bites as he laughs." For the Dadas, humor was an instrument of destruction and anarchy; for the Surrealists it was the tool of a far more systematic dissent. Both groups, however, realized their black humor was based on the unexpected, the I-didn't-know-whether-to-laugh-or-cry attitude, whose most potent vehicle is the double meaning, the hybrid creature or metaphor. Ernst's Dada collages (1919-21) demonstrated this by direct dislocation, juxtaposition of anything against anything else, usually producing an air of anarchy

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crucial to the movement's urge to bust everything wide open. The Surrealist collages and paintings (after 1922) re-settled into an equally unsettling, but at the same time continuous narrative sequence established by systematizing the objects and spaces wrenched out of their normal scale and perspectives. The latent theatricality became more overt as Surrealist program replaced Dada anti-program and the Parisian ambiance replaced that of post-war Germany.[1]

The apogee of this tendency was reached in actual book form. *La Femme 100 têtes* (best translated as "The Hundred-Headless Woman") was begun in a hospital bed with a gift of nineteenth-century magazines illustrated by wood engravings which are inherently fantastic without any alteration whatsoever. It was the first of Ernst's three collage-novels, which have since been much imitated but never equalled. The engravings were re-arranged into a sequence of startlingly ominous and unheard-of scenes. Though some of the original collages have found their way into collections, the book itself, consisting of collages photographed for reproduction so that no trace of process remained, was intended as the work of art. "The Hundred-Headless Woman" is a picture book, each plate poetically captioned by a glancing reference to its contents. Neither pictures nor captions, however, carry the "plot" alone; they parallel each other and offer a double viewpoint that forms a stereoscopic unity. The reader-observer must literally read between the lines provided by the verbal-visual interaction, and project himself into that intermediary space. In this manner, Ernst made a work by mixing oil and water, or rather he found the alchemical element, or context, in which the unmixable could be mixed. The collage-novels are also decidedly cinematic in effect. The pictorial dislocation of action and sequence juxtaposed against the ambiguous captions, apparently out of sync, suggest a silent movie with subtitles in an unknown language. The mixing is done, impressionistically, in the mind.

Here then, is an example of "literary art," but not of illustration. The distinction must be the degree of separation or fusion between the verbal and the visual. "Intellectual" artists seem to have been restricted to two modes during the twentieth century—"geometric" purism (Mondrian) and the metaphysical branch of "literary" painting (Duchamp). Ernst is an exception in that he has lent a stringent literacy, even erudition, to a poetic irrational art that amounts, at times, to play. It is this factor that endows his best work with a depth rare in the explosive annals of Dada and Surrealism. Added to this is the fact that the restless mobility that has marked Ernst's life (he has been a citizen of three countries) has also affected, or found outlets in, his art. He has been called the "compleat Surrealist" for his technical

[1] The two most obvious examples of Ernst's use of word-image are two "poem-paintings" from 1923-24—*Dans une ville pleine de mystères . . .* and *Qui est ce grand malade . . . ;* I prefer the latter but feel that neither one reaches the formal or the emotional depths of the work discussed here.

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and stylistic experiments, which range from fantastic illusionism to near abstraction and back, and forth, and so forth, providing endless problems for the categorically confined critic.

Ernst's experimental intuition, then, supported by the kind of analytical mind more often occupied with reason than unreason, has allowed him more scope than most artists of his generation, and it is this innate dialectic (schizophrenia) which has led him to make the visual/verbal, conscious/unconscious pun his territory. The "collage esthetic" underlying all of Dada and Surrealist art was to a great extent Ernst's own invention. Like many of his colleagues he came to it via Giorgio de Chirico's Metaphysical Period (Chirico's titles, even when chosen by friends, cast curious highlights on his oneiric imagery) and, later, via Lautréamont's famous example: "the chance encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on a dissecting table"; but Ernst had the additional advantage of having studied abnormal psychology when a philosophy major at the University of Bonn; he had even planned a book on art made by the inmates of a nearby asylum. The way he used, or fused, writing and pictorial images in the Dada collages was much closer to the intermingling typical of schizophrenic art than it was to the Cubist *papiers collés* which provide the direct art-historical precedent, and in which writing was a formal rather than associative element. This early exposure to what the Surrealists later called automatism prepared him to create the harsh scale dislocations of Dada photo-collage and made him ultra-sensitive to the fissures of unease in de Chirico's outwardly bland compositions, permitting him to break through that surface to the more radical formal and emotional displacement which played conscious reaction against unconscious response, especially in the work of 1921-25. Later this was to supply a common ground between Ernst and André Breton, who had also worked with the mentally ill and had by 1922, when Ernst arrived in Paris, experimented in free association and writing while in a trance.

The revelation of the Stockholm show for me was a recently rediscovered group of murals Ernst made in 1922-23 when living with Paul and Gala Eluard at their house in Eaubonne. Here (and in the Dada collages of the two preceding years) are the origins of Ernst's lifetime iconography: the bird-fish (water-air) hybrid, the male and female snake and horse confusion later explored in the "Bride of the Wind" series, the bottle-form as hermaphroditic vessel and phallus (perhaps a source of the headless woman who appears from this time on), the fan the flower the ball the balloon and the boat, each playing a different role depending on its context and on the element with which it is confronted. The largest surviving painting of this series is called *Natural History,* like the 1925 frottage series in which so many of these images reappear, and stylistically it anticipates works as late as the illusionistic "jungle" series from the late 'thirties and 'forties. On Paul Eluard's walls, Ernst displayed his repertory, stated his

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vocabulary. It was an appropriate place. Poet and painter were extremely close at this time, having met in 1921 when Eluard came to Cologne to meet Ernst and select collages to illustrate his 1922 book *Répétitions.* The same year the two collaborated equally on *Les Malheurs des Immortels révélés par Paul Eluard et Max Ernst.* If Ernst was the founder of Surrealist painting, no poet, as Marcel Raymond has observed, came closer than Eluard to the specifications in Breton's second manifesto:

> Everything suggests the belief that there is a certain point of the mind where life and death, the real and the imaginary, the past and the future, the communicable and the incommunicable, the high and the low are no longer perceived as contradictions. It would be vain to look for any motive in Surrealist activity other than the hope of determining that point.

The two were bound together by what Aragon called Surrealism's vice: "the immoderate and passionate use of the drug which is the 'image'." Differences in medium provoked few differences between them. Of Ernst's extraordinary "unmasking" of resemblances between man and animal and plant, matter and idea, Eluard wrote:

> It is not far, by bird, from cloud to man, it is not far by images, from man to what he *sees,* from the nature of real things to the nature of imagined things. The value is the same. Matter, movement, need, desire, are inseparable. The honor of living is well worth forcing oneself to vivify. Think of flowers, fruit, and the heart of the tree, for they carry your colors, for they are one of the necessary signs of your presence. You will be refused the belief that everything is transmutable into everything only from the moment when you offer it no idea. . . . I do not know if a poet has ever penetrated more deeply into these fundamental truths than has Max Ernst.

Most artists using words are underlining or interpreting or polemicizing aspects of the visual work which are unclear without verbal additions. Ernst has often managed to fuse the two entities on the level where images and forms are personally interpreted. For example, in the Dada collage *The Hat Makes the Man* (see illus.), a phallustrade in every sense, the visual pun is extended by the verbal puns in the accompanying inscription: "*Bedecktsamiger stapel-mensch nacktsamiger wasserformer ('edelformer') kleidsame nervatur auch UMPRESSNERVEN! (C'est le chapeau qui fait l'homme, le style c'est le tailleur).*" Any literal English translation leaves much to be desired, given the interlingual word plays, but: "Seed-covered, stacked-up man, seedless waterformer ('*edelformer*') well-fitting nervous system also tightly-fitted nerves (the hat makes the man, style is the tailor)." *Edelformer,* for instance, is untranslatable into one word, but its implications are clear if one notes that *edel* means "noble, lofty, exalted,

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precious, excellent," *eine edler Gang* means "a rich vein," and *edle teile* are private parts. Surely those whose German is better than mine will find other levels, other meanings; those that are evident, along with the visual manifestation, leave no doubts as to the associations made by the artist. Words and forms begin to bounce on and off each other in a trans-disciplinary, cross-referential action that continues to provide surprises long after the initial decoding.

However, the distance to which these references can travel is not sufficiently clear when limited to the isolated collage and caption at hand. To appreciate fully the breadth of Ernst's grasping laughter, one must plunge into the iconographic thicket surrounding his work from this period, and for that matter, for the rest of his life, though I have to draw the line somewhere—unernstian but necessary. *The Hat Makes the Man* is a 1920 collage in which a page from a hat catalogue has been transformed, by means of watercolor, pencil, scissors, and a little glue (as Ernst says, plumes may make plumage, but glue [*colle*] doesn't make a collage), into a series of sculptural vignettes which have mechanistic, organic, cartoon-like and even narrative characteristics. Ernst's first father-in-law had a hat factory. In 1920 the artist also made a three-dimensional *phallus-trade* constructed of hat molds (spectators were invited to take a swipe at art with an attached axe). The hat covers the head; formally it resembles the cover of the head of the male organ; it is also a repressive factor, a cover-up, an overlay of "civilization" on the seat of the subconscious; one tipped one's hat (uncovered, bared oneself) briefly when saying good day, when communicating with others, especially ladies. Dada's view of European man in 1920 as a "stacked-up," "seedless" puppet or "mannequin," repressed, oppressed and manipulated by bourgeois capitalism, imprisoned in "tight-fitting nerve"-clothes, slave to style, and much in need of uncovering, is one reference; another (the seeds, the plant, the water, the growth factor inherent in such towering, piling-up forms) is Ernst's long-standing identity with the forces of nature. ("Dada is for nature and against art": Jean Arp.) Biological and anatomical illustrations, diagrams and photographs combined with material drawn from machine catalogues or advertising material (all "man-made") are the skeleton of Ernst's morphology. Time and again an element appearing first in a collage, discovered strictly by chance, will reappear as a painted shape or be translated into other images simply by change of context. (The "female" version of *The Hat Makes the Man* is a horizontal page of ladies' hats inscribed: "The sandworm which reties her sandal/the torpedo fly which forms an aside/the terrible solar lips which coil around the horizon.")

For example, the staggered, cumulative forms of *The Hat Makes the Man* recur throughout Ernst's oeuvre, in contemporary collages like *Zambesiland (Paysage à mon gout)* and *Le Limacon de chambre,* in the 1921 painting *Elephant of the Celebes* (see illus.), the 1934

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'38 and '61 sculptures *Oedipus I, Chimeras* and *Soul Sisters,* and in various of the flower and jungle paintings; it was predicted by the wooden relief, *Fruit of a Long Experience,* and the drawings, *Fiat Modes/Pereat Ars,* both of 1919. It is a form often interwoven or associated with the eye, the eye-ball, the ball alone (as in the *Oedipus* sculpture) and with horned heads (*Elephant of the Celebes, Oedipus Rex*). These in turn relate to the vertical "father figure" in the 1923 canvas *Revolution by Night,* which refers to de Chirico's father images (*The Child's Brain,* 1914) and wears the bowler hat featured in *The Hat Makes the Man,* as well as the "turned-up mustaches" of Ernst's own father, who appears in an early dream memory or hallucination as "a [mustached] black and gleaming man" making "slow, comical and . . . joyously obscene gestures." Other images connected with this sequence are the moon, a hollow pipe-like whistle, and the ball-earth-hole conglomerate, all of which appear in Ernst's writings and are recapitulated in *The Hundred-Headless Woman.* The pole-like plant form derived from the phallic jointed shape also appears in this connection. One of the Eluard murals mentioned above, *Au premier mot limpide* (see illus.), groups the ball, tree, wall, window, hand and string which are first found in a collage from Eluard's and Ernst's *Répétitions* ("The Invention"); there two huge fingers emerge from and fill a window; they hold a vise-like machine clamped onto a disembodied bird's claw; below it a tiny hand holding a flower rises from a hole in the ground, while at left a bird walks on stilts made of stylized eye-claw motifs. The same year *Oedipus Rex* (see illus.) combined these elements in painted form and with more immediacy. An immense man's hand (fingers only visible) emerges from a window holding a partially opened walnut shell pierced by an arrow and a machine-like bow which in turn pierces two of the fingers; two giant bird heads, one with a fence-collar, the other with horns, both with large, upside down human eyes, rise from holes in the ground; a string tied over the horns disappears out of the top margin of the canvas; a tiny balloon hovers in the sky. The Eluard mural conveys an associational "message" similar to these and to that of *The Hat Makes the Man.* The string here spells out the German word *"um"* ("around"), the feminine fingers are crossed, like legs, and between them is a red ball, echoed on the trunks of the artichoke-like trees (*artichaut* could be "art is hot") which appear as a woman's head in the *Histoire Naturelle* frottages.

In addition, the theme of *pressure*—physical, or (re-pressive) political and social—is constantly repeated in the paintings and collages of this period. In *Au premier mot limpide,* the hand hangs limply through the window as though trapped between the wall and the tree that stands just behind the wall, leaving an ambiguous space that would barely allow a volume to be inserted. (Salvador Dali reworked this image in *Un Chien Andalou* when the hero's hand is closed in the door; its connection with the famous sliced eye-opener of the

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same film may have been taken from the same group of Ernst paintings; it is no secret that Dali was much influenced by Ernst at that point.) The vise image, a machine squeezing the fingers (or in the case of *La femme équivoque,* 1923, the whole female body) is reversed in a *Femme 100 têtes* collage where the hand squeezes the machine (see illus.). John Russell has also noted this "sense of strain" in work from that period, citing *Saint Cecilia* (see illus.), where a figure half-encased in a brick-wall-oven reaches out to play the piano; another "prisoner" piece is *Pays charmant,* where a nude couple embrace within a similar shell, not to mention all the caged bird paintings of the 1920's. Russell attributes this to the conditions of Ernst's life at the time (he was living in Paris without a passport and working full-time in a bric-a-brac factory), but it is also traceable to the "breakthrough," conscious and unconscious, propagated by Dada, a breakthrough Ernst understood so well that he was pushing against those walls before he discovered that his task was shared by others. (Even the word Dada, chosen at random, mocks the father, and thus the paternalistic State and all it stands for.) As a last example of the theme, I should like to mention one of Ernst's greatest (and one of his most abstract) paintings—*The Blind Swimmer* of 1934, in which the "seed" and the "eye," the compression, the verticality, the bird and fish motifs, come together in an ultimate statement of the pressure theme and its erotic implications (see illus.).

The "meaning" of paintings such as this very abstract work, or the earlier and more anecdotal *Oedipus Rex,* must, at least from my point of view, be understood as operating on a flexible, personally manipulable level, rather than within a static program by which each obviously symbolic detail is assigned a specific "significance." In *The Blind Swimmer,* the imagery is clear enough; the "blind swimmer" being a poetic euphemism for the male organ (its image seen head-on, as an eyeless fish with a large "mouth") and the image in the painting being an obvious "illustration" of the passage of the seed (doubling as egg and the pupil of an eye) through the vagina, implying as it does, by its rhythmic and repetitive stripes, the curving pressures of the act of love and possible procreation, while the vertical scheme implies the "soaring" aspects of orgasm. In *Oedipus Rex,* the formal and referential theme is stated more deviously. Given the title and the myth as the point of departure, each viewer will interpret it in the framework of his own experience and perhaps expertise in Freudian and Jungian analysis. One can mention the "soaring" analogy which appears here too, or the penetration, the pressure to open the rounded or split female form, held by the huge hand of authority, and the painfully misplaced penetration from the sides by the sharper, smaller phallic forms, the "fenced-in" or imprisoned female bird, and so forth. But one hesitates to go on, not only because everything tends to evoke something else, and differently each time, but also because these paintings' greatness lies in their appeal to "body ego" or

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direct physical consciousness of such visual shapes despite the parallel literary credentials. Like stifled and pinned butterflies (another Ernst image), such symbols and interpretations tend to lose their lustre when they lose their mobility.

Ernst is not alone in the efficacy of his metamorphic effects. I can't resist mentioning the kind of Eskimo masks Edmund Carpenter calls "great, composite, mobile puns," where "the same lines serve to depict Walrus-Caribou-Man; turned slightly, one form may be emphasized, but the others are never lost. There is no need for shape-shifting; all relevant forms are already present. Such a mask expresses the variety and infinite subtlety of personality; its power lies in preserving due proportion between diverse and opposite elements." Carpenter also discusses the Northwest Coast Indian masks which stress "coming to be," where the Eskimos stress a simultaneous "is." For instance, a Northwest Coast wolf mask may open suddenly to reveal "bear; this springs apart—within is the face of another spirit. Nothing has a definite, invariable shape. Like Echo, the mystical being who successively comes to be all things, the mask is shape-shifting; by a sudden metamorphosis, it is first this, then that."[2] ("The Nymph Echo" figures repeatedly in Ernst's writings and paintings.) One is also reminded of Claes Oldenburg's soft sculptures, which operate in the area of physical identity between man and object, body and material. Incidentally, Oldenburg's humor, his interest in transference from one medium to another also resemble Ernst's. In his notes the former talks about his sculptural forms "rhyming" and wrote of a 1966 show: " 'The Typewriter' is there to remind one that a large part of the show is hidden, is in fact *written*."

Like Oldenburg, a good many contemporary artists speak of letting the materials determine the form, as Ernst had written about the "purely passive role" of the artist confronted by his materials, and the process, or mechanism by which he "reads" them, or allows them to "dictate" their inherent desires to him. A movement "back to nature," the relationship of art to life, of chance to art and humor to life, with all the political implications appended to such phrases, is being explored again today through very different channels; some so-called "conceptual art" is, in fact, the new "literary art," often totally excluding the tangible, visual element but remaining "visual art" by intention as well as context. (See my "Art Within the Arctic Circle," THE HUDSON REVIEW, Winter, 1969-70.) Anonymity and collaboration are among its symptoms. In May, 1920, André Breton wrote about Ernst's collages: "Who knows if we are not somehow preparing ourselves to escape from the principle of identity?"

[2] Edmund Carpenter, "Image Making in Arctic Art," in Gyorgy Kepes, ed., *Sign, Image, Symbol* (Braziller, 1966); pp. 206-225. Claude Lévi-Strauss, in his *Tristes Tropiques*, notes similar motives in the face and body paintings of Brazilian tribes. Ernst was attracted to the idea of tattooing or body-painting (for instance, in his since destroyed canvas of 1923, *La Belle Jardinière*) and the implications of an overlay of art or the artificial on man or the natural impulse.

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B. H. HAGGIN

Music and Ballet Chronicle

THE NEW YORK CITY BALLET put on a two-week non-subscription season at the end of the summer; and fortunately I got back in time to see some of the performances of the second week. I say fortunately, not only because of the things I saw, but because of the unusually favorable conditions under which I saw them—the atmosphere created by the more perceptive and more responsive non-subscription audiences. Even the Sunday-evening audience that didn't fill the theater responded to Violette Verdy's unique stylistic elegance in the Tchaikovsky *Pas de Deux* with a warmth that exceeded anything I could recall in recent years; and the capacity audiences on Tuesday evening and Wednesday afternoon responded as warmly to the overwhelming things she did in *Swan Lake* and *Emeralds.* I must add that in the Tchaikovsky *Pas de Deux* she surmounted the handicaps of Robert Irving's excessively fast tempos and Jean-Pierre Bonnefous's continuing insecurity in the intricacies of the Balanchine-style partnering, as against the kind of partnering in *Swan Lake* that he is used to and did very well.

The Sunday-evening audience responded with suitable warmth also to an achievement of Allegra Kent's as unique in its different way as Verdy's—her performance in *Bugaku,* with its breathtakingly secure slow-motion execution of movements of the utmost delicacy and the tensile strength of fine wire, in which, even when they attain great intensity, she continues to be personally remote as though they were the movements of a ritual. When her performance was first seen in 1963 it was with one by Villella that matched hers in its quiet elegance; but now it maintains itself, unchanged, in the face of a performance that he makes more violent each time—a performance which is effective considered in and for itself, but damagingly out of relation to Kent's and to the rest of the ballet's choreographic context.

The Kent performances in *Bugaku* and in *Swan Lake* Saturday afternoon with Peter Martins which the audiences responded to warmly were familiar; but Wednesday afternoon's audience saw her first performance in *Diamonds* with Martins, one of the great events of the week, since it restored to the long *pas de deux* that is the heart of this ballet the beauty and effect it had not had since Suzanne Farrell's departure from the company. Kay Mazzo may be "the kind of girl any decent man [in the opinion of Clive Barnes] would offer his subway seat to"; but this didn't make her the kind of dancer who could do more than go through the movements of the *pas de deux*

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in *Diamonds* with a blandness that, after a time, caused me not even to see them; whereas my attention was seized and held by the exquisite beauty and affecting expressiveness the movements had in Kent's performance. Unfortunately there hadn't been enough time for her to learn her interpolations in the Scherzo (I take this to be the reason for its omission); but one must hope that this first performance was not her last, and that the next ones will include the Scherzo.

Another of the newly acquired male dancers, Helgi Tomasson, had the reserve physical strength that enabled him to produce an unstraining performance in *Tarantella* comparable with Villella's in brilliance and attractiveness, even if not in dynamic force. Suki Schorer, substituting for Patricia McBride in *Rubies,* proved to be an effective partner for Villella in her different piquant style. And Marnee Morris was an excellent Siren in *Prodigal Son,* in which it was an agreeable surprise to see Villella's improvement in the last two scenes—how much more he achieved by doing so much less, especially in facial expression. But in the performance of *Who Cares?* in which Mazzo substituted for McBride and Merrill Ashley for Karin von Aroldingen, the work lost a great deal from Mazzo's lack of the amplitude of movement required for the filling out of the sustained supported adagio with d'Amboise to *The Man I Love,* and from Ashley's inability to do more than execute accurately the movements that von Aroldingen had done with impressive style in her solo to *I'll Build a Stairway to Paradise* and her duo with d'Amboise to *Who Cares?*

And finally, there was the highly satisfying experience of seeing *Afternoon of a Faun* with Moncion, whom no one has equaled in his role, and Kent, who has come nearest to achieving what LeClercq achieved originally in the piece.

The Stuttgart Ballet's first visit in 1969 occurred when I was no longer reviewing anything presented by S. Hurok; but although I didn't see its productions I had seen earlier ballets of John Cranko's; and they would have made me doubt the excellence that Clive Barnes reported in Cranko's new ballets for his Stuttgart company even if I hadn't been taught such skepticism by Mr. Barnes's similar praise of worthless ballets that I *had* seen. Since the Stuttgart Ballet is returning this year I think I should report that I found my doubts justified by a review of the 1969 engagement in *Dance Review.* Arleen Croce writes in a somewhat mannered style; but I have found her accurately perceptive, and—after my experiences with Cranko's earlier ballets and Mr. Barnes's reviews—believe what she wrote about the Stuttgart Ballet:

> Not even Sol Hurok could have wrought the kind of success the Stuttgart had because impresarios alone do not make ballet companies; critics and audiences do. . . . The Stuttgart was a hit be-

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cause the critics of New York had said so and begun saying so before it had so much as set foot on the Met stage. From Mr. Walter Terry had come a typically fulsome preview of the company in a *Saturday Review* cover story. From Mr. Clive Barnes, far more ominously, several columns of his Sunday space all but giving it away then and there: "On Tuesday [the] Stuttgart Ballet . . . opens . . . It could be a night to be recorded in ballet history." By whom? Well, by Mr. Barnes, of course, since nobody else does that kind of recording around here. . . . There never was a more dispensable opening. . . . Except in the ads and the reviews, the Stuttgart isn't a "great" company, isn't a "miracle," isn't "of major international status"; it's just a modest little company and now it's got a great big head. Too modest, gentlemen, too nondescript. Too many gaseous, depleted, bottom-of-the-bill ballets by bottom-dog choreographer Cranko.

Thinking about the essential equipment of a critic—his judgment and taste—and how it was acquired, I remembered a statement a few years ago by the violist Nicolas Moldavan. Before he joined the NBC Symphony he had played in the Flonzaley and Coolidge Quartets; and he remarked that he would have been a better quartet-player if he had played *first* with Toscanini: "In a quartet you have four individuals; and if I feel like playing this passage a little broader I take my time; and the cellist takes *his* time; and so the music becomes distorted. What Toscanini taught me was that a piece of music has a frame, and you phrase and build within this frame." Learning this and other things of that kind by playing with Toscanini was the way Moldavan developed the musical taste that guided his operation as a performing musician; and it occurred to me that what he learned as a participant in Toscanini's performances could have been learned also by a listener to them. I did in fact, by listening to them, learn that a piece of music had a frame, and the performer had to phrase and build within that frame—which is to say, his every modified tempo and sonority had to be in proportion to what had preceded. And learning this and other such things by listening to Toscanini's performances and rehearsals was in effect a process of developing the judgment I applied to what I heard and reported on as a professional listener, a critic. Toscanini was not the only performing musician who taught me in this way: Schnabel, Szigeti, Casals, the Budapest Quartet, Rethberg, Schumann, Flagstad, Bjoerling were some of the others. Nor did their teaching result in my accepting only their performances. Toscanini's working within a frame, and in this way achieving proportion, continuity and coherence in the shape in sound he produced, established such proportion, continuity and coherence as some of the essentials of good performance, which I was able to hear when they were achieved by other conductors in performances different from his; and thus he provided me with criteria which en-

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abled me to recognize good performances by conductors as different as Beecham, Cantelli, Colin Davis, and flawed ones by Stokowski, Koussevitzky, Furtwängler, Bernstein. And the same with Schnabel, Szigeti, Flagstad, Bjoerling and the rest.

But Moldavan's musical taste developed through his playing with Toscanini because he was capable of learning what Toscanini had to teach; and a listener's musical judgment would develop through his hearing great musical performers only if he too had the ability to learn from what he heard them do. Actually most non-professional listeners do *not* have this ability—which is why audiences that respond with cheers to the playing of Ashkenazy respond in the same way to the playing of Barenboim. And actually most professional listeners don't have it either—which is why they write about Barenboim as if he were another Ashkenazy. Realizing that what was true of most was true of one in particular enabled me to understand at last what had until then baffled me: how a professionally trained musician like Winthrop Sargeant, who had played in the New York Philharmonic a couple of years with Toscanini and acquired close-range experience of the plasticity and grace characteristic of his performances, could find in Szell's steely, graceless performances those which today most closely resembled Toscanini's, and could commend Mehta for not imitating Toscanini's rigidity as other young conductors did. Or how, after having heard all the great conductors of the past forty years down to Colin Davis and Boulez of today, he could write after Barenboim's pedestrian and coarsely played Beethoven *Eroica* and his vulgarly italicized Mozart *Prague* that he was "the most promising conductor of his generation," with "every one of the endowments that will . . . in all probability make him a very distinguished maestro." Or how, after having heard Schnabel's perfectly articulated and shaped performances of Beethoven, he could hear in Barenboim's undisciplined operation in the *Appassionata*—in the expressive crescendos that were too violent, the retardations that lingered too long, the pauses that were too great, the *Andante con moto* theme of the variation movement that was too slow, the first variation that was too fast after the slow theme, the feathery playing that was ludicrously unsuitable in the impassioned finale—the "extraordinary musical taste and intelligence," the "fine sense of repose," the "infallible sense of form" that made Barenboim "one of the world's important artists of the keyboard." All these baffling statements, and the many others, I now understand: Sargeant has heard the greatest musicians of the past forty years; but he learned nothing from them that enables him to know today when he is hearing a good performance by a pianist or conductor and when he is hearing a bad one.

The inflated obituary rhetoric after Szell's death—dealing with him as a conductor and musician with powers, attitudes and achieve-

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ments similar to Toscanini's—revealed that Schonberg and Kolodin also had learned nothing from their extensive hearing of Toscanini. One of Moldavan's observations a few years ago is worth reporting in this connection. Recalling an evening in Los Angeles which his quartet had spent with musicians who had included Szigeti, Feuermann and Szell, and at which "we played quartets for our pleasure," Moldavan said: "Szell sat down at the piano afterwards and played not only the quartets but each part separately." And he added: "Though Szell leaves me cold as a conductor, he has this great knowledge." Which is to say, Szell had remarkable technical gifts that were evident in the marvelous orchestra he created and the marvelous playing he got it to do; but his deficiencies as a musician were evident in the performances of Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert with this orchestra that left Moldavan—and people like Moldavan—cold.

It is puzzling as well as depressing that the bad performances Barenboim produces on the piano and with an orchestra impress not only reviewers but great musicians—that Boulez has him as soloist in a concerto (William Youngren, who heard a tape of the joint performance, reported that Barenboim played very badly), that Fischer-Dieskau sings with him in concerts and on records. I see this as another demonstration of the fact that an unfounded claim need only be enormous enough to be accepted as true. Barenboim's gift for self-promotion began to operate very early: he managed to get himself heard by, and photographed with, celebrated musicians, and in this way to spread his name around, as a boy prodigy; and so when at fifteen he claimed attention for his performance of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata in London, it was given, and the *Times* reviewer reported hearing as good a performance as had been heard in this century. And after that it was more of the same—with not only reviewers but musicians like Boulez and Fischer-Dieskau hearing what Barenboim claimed to be producing instead of what he actually presented to their ears.

Another example of this method of operation seems to me to call for attention. 1969 was a year of celebration, ostensibly of Berlioz, who had died a hundred years earlier, but actually also of Jacques Barzun, who nineteen years earlier had published his book *Berlioz and the Romantic Century*. I discussed in the last issue George Steiner's contention that this book had brought about the performance and appreciation of the music that until then had been unperformed and unappreciated; I report now on an article in *ADAM International Review* (1969) in which Michael Wright credits the book with doing as much for the writing on Berlioz.

> He produced the revaluation of Berlioz that nobody was expecting; and as soon as it was understood, it was regarded as inevitable. . . . Barzun's achievement was to establish Berlioz as a man of

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> strength and stability, not the grotesquely weak and over-emotional person as he had so often been represented. The author's broad, humanistic views, coupled with a deep knowledge of the period, allowed him insights into Berlioz's mind such as no previous critic had ever quite achieved. . . . It is difficult to estimate what the future of Berlioz criticism would have been without Barzun. [His] influence has been great. . . . Most American critics by now have Berlioz well under their belts. Bernard H. Haggin . . . in 'Berlioz' (*Kenyon Review,* no. 4, 1955) . . . analyses some of the lesser known works. Winthrop Sargeant in the *New Yorker,* and Irving Kolodin in the *Saturday Review* have covered some performances.

And presumably Wright also sees Barzun's influence in the English critics he cites, including David Cairns. In these contentions Steiner and Wright accept what Barzun himself claimed: that he had set out to write the book which would, and did, establish the truth about Berlioz and his music in place of the misinformation and misconceptions that had previously filled books and program notes and thus predisposed the public against the music on the infrequent occasions when it was performed—to which he added that the book happened to appear at the very time, around 1950, when "the long-playing disc . . . supplied almost overnight a . . . repertory . . . of Berlioz" which the public previously had not had available to it, and which now provided it with "conclusive proof through the ear" of what he said in the book.

But actually, as I pointed out in my comment on the Steiner piece, the battle for Berlioz and his music had been won by the time Barzun's book appeared. 1950 was fifteen years after Turner's and Wotton's books had established fully the truth about the man and his music in place of the generally accepted misconceptions (the books were published in England; but Wotton's was also issued by the Oxford Press in this country, and I wrote about it in 1936). And what caused record companies to record the Berlioz repertory on LP's was the interest of the record-buying public, which had been built up not by what it had read but by what it had heard in the previous twenty years' performances, broadcasts and 78-rpm recordings of the *Symphonie Fantastique, Harold in Italy, Romeo and Juliet,* the overtures, *The Damnation of Faust,* the *Requiem*—by Toscanini, Harty, Beecham, Koussevitzky and other conductors—that had made these works standard repertory.

Nor did Barzun, as Wright maintains, add new insights to those of his predecessors. Since the Romantic century was outside of my interest and competence the book in its entirety was reviewed in *The Nation* by Robert Garis, and I commented in my column later on the little I had read that did interest me. Garis's first point was that Barzun had fought the battle on the wrong terrain: "Berlioz

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must be vindicated first at the *ears* of the enemy. It is the greatness of his music that must be demonstrated to ears . . . closed to its beauties"; but Barzun's discussions of the music gave the reader very little idea of "what the music really *sounds* like." What Barzun was concerned with, and how little it illuminated the music for the reader, can be seen in what I reported later:

> In the course of a very fancy discussion of Berlioz's elevated aim in the *Symphonie Fantastique*—which, says Barzun, was to produce not a piece of program music but, like Beethoven, "a large-scale piece which should be *une oeuvre*—One Work"—i.e. a unified musical work—Barzun quotes from Abraham's [*A Hundred Years of Music*] the statement that "for the first movement. . . . Berlioz cast his 'reveries and passions' in the shape of a perfectly comprehensible modification of classical first-movement form," but doesn't mention Abraham's preceding statement that Berlioz "had three or four orchestral pieces, from the derelict 'Faust' ballet of 1828 and the 'Francs Juges' opera, on his hands; cast about for some central literary idea to bind them together; and, having found it, composed the first movement and revised and rearranged the remainder to fit the scheme. . . . Beethoven would never have thought of sticking several unrelated pieces together and calling them a symphony."

So with the discussion of Berlioz himself: where Wright sees Barzun's humanistic views and knowledge of the period yielding new insights into Berlioz's mind, Garis found him "[showing] Berlioz in a straitjacket of his ideas. . . . Seldom distinguished in themselves, [the conceptual schemes] distract Mr. Barzun's attention from . . . psychological analysis of the man and musical analysis of the works" and bring with them "inflation and distortion of the man and his mind." Garis's example was what Barzun made of Berlioz's recollection of his first communion as the occasion of his "first musical impression." Pointing out that the boy had had musical impressions and even musical training before that, Barzun accounted for Berlioz's statement by the impressiveness of this occasion in providing his first experience of "the use of music for a meaningful ceremony in man's life. The memory he kept so vividly . . . reveals an instinctive choice. From the outset he felt that music was one of the necessities of life, and not a decoration or artificial pleasure." For Garis the explanation was rather that "the ceremony was itself impressive . . . ; to a musically sensitive boy it was musically impressive;" and this caused it to "displace other memories, yielding a first 'musical impression.'" Barzun, he said, "projected into the boy Berlioz a conceptualizing self-consciousness which there is no evidence that he possessed"; and he did this to establish a "crude antithesis between music as a necessity and music as decoration" that later served, in the discussion of program music, "as a blunt distinction between eighteenth-century music and nineteenth-century

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music," and helped "to erect, behind the composition of the 'Funeral and Triumphal Symphony,' a pretentious theory of music for large national celebrations."

In its dealing with both the man and his music, then, this was a book which clearly did not do what it claimed to do, but whose claims were, nevertheless, accepted by all who reviewed it except Garis and myself, and are still accepted today. And the reason for this was, as in Barenboim's case, the magnitude of the claims for what one had long heard was to be the definitive, the ultimate book on Berlioz, the apparent confirmation of these claims by the physical magnitude of the two volumes of a thousand-odd pages, the profusion of footnotes, the enormous bibliography. This parade of scholarship inspired in most the awe it was intended to inspire; but Garis thought "a bibliography of 1474 items seems excessive even for a book of this size"; and there must have been a number of other items in it like two I encountered: what a footnote designated as "*1308*, art. Berlioz," which turned out to be a paragraph introducing the Berlioz recordings in the 1942 *Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia;* and my *Book of the Symphony,* whose sole reference to Berlioz was his inclusion in a listing of possible works for a future second volume.

"The text," Garis added, "is cluttered with quotations from any and all books read, the footnotes with every sort of tangential irrelevancy that has come to the mind or the filing cabinet of a man widely read in several fields. . . . Time and again . . . the material between quotation marks is commonplace . . . and . . . the triviality of most of the material in the footnotes . . . at times reaches to free association." And in addition to Barzun's suppression of the context of the Abraham statement he quoted in his discussion of the *Symphonie Fantastique,* my limited reading turned up examples of the spinning of sheer invention that were equally unexpected in a work of such ostentatious scholarship—e.g. the statement about the new Berlioz criticism that had "Mr. B. H. Haggin taking up the tradition which Paul Rosenfeld had inaugurated amid general indifference in the previous decade." It was intended to make me feel very grand (and grateful); but it happened only in the Barzun world of gracious gratitude-inducing inventions: in the real world Rosenfeld's essay in *Musical Portraits,* which itself included much Rosenfeldian spinning of inventions, did not start a continuous line of critical writing on Berlioz, amid the general hostility in the twenties, from which I could have taken off in the thirties; and what I did take off from was Toscanini's performances of Berlioz's music.

The influence of this "tedious fakery" (as Hayden Carruth referred to it in this magazine on one occasion) has been evident only in writing like Steiner's and Wright's. My 1955 article in *Kenyon Review,* actually a chapter in my *Listener's Musical Companion,* was for the most part a long detailed examination not, as Wright

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says, of "some of the lesser-known works" but of some major works—the *Requiem, Harold in Italy, Romeo and Juliet,* two of the songs of *Les Nuits d'Eté*—and an expansion of my *Nation* writing on these works in the forties, which was influenced only by what I heard. Thus Koussevitzky's recording of *Harold in Italy* impelled me to write in 1945 that "on the maps, provided by critics and teachers, on which I had to depend in my youthful exploration of the world of music Berlioz was marked off as a desert," and that "the truth about Berlioz . . . was something I had to discover through my own experience of the music;" to write, concerning what I had discovered, that "the marvels in his music are the product of a great melodic gift, a subtle harmonic sense, a magician's ear for the orchestra," and that "the Berlioz melody is an exfoliating progression, with unexpected turns and exquisite inflections which pivot on, and are enriched by, equally unexpected and exquisite moves in the underlying harmony, and with further enrichment by the subtly contrived instrumental colors;" and then to point out where these things were to be heard in *Harold.*

My occasional reading of Cairns's perceptive writing on works of Berlioz has given me the impression that it too has represented nothing but his own experience of the music. And on the other hand I can't see Barzun's influence in Winthrop Sargeant's ceaseless pondering on what is wrong with Berlioz and his music—his conclusion, on one occasion, that the excesses and lapses in the music resulted from Berlioz's amateurishness. He foresaw someone pointing to the treatise on orchestration as evidence of the contrary; but that remarkable work, he said, "dealt, after all, with only one, fairly superficial aspect of music"; which revealed a profound misconception of the orchestral element in Berlioz's music. And it turned out that by amateurishness Sargeant meant Berlioz's not playing the piano. It had struck him that the great composers up to and during Berlioz's time had been pianists or organists who therefore had "had an extraordinarily intimate knowledge of the relation between music as played and music as written," whereas Berlioz, since he was "unable to perform his own gigantic works by himself with the aid of a keyboard, often miscalculated his effects." Actually the magical *Queen Mab* Scherzo was the writing of a man who, as Wotton pointed out, did his musical thinking directly in terms of the orchestra, and therefore calculated his effects with absolute accuracy without the aid that a piano couldn't give him in such music. Moreover, what was performed had first to be rehearsed, and the rehearsals provided Berlioz with the opportunities to correct miscalculations that the piano provided other composers with; so that what Sargeant hears as miscalculations Berlioz presumably heard as exactly what he wanted.

In the latest of the Stravinsky-Craft books, *Retrospectives and Conclusions,*[1] Stravinsky and Craft operate independently. Stravinsky's

[1] RETROSPECTIVES AND CONCLUSIONS, by *Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft.* Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95.

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section includes "comments on the musical scene and other matters" —the other matters being everything going on in the world—presented in the form of ostensible interviews in which the alleged questioners are the magazines in which they appeared; a discussion of Gesualdo, originally a preface to a book by Glenn E. Watkins; a parallel comment on the details of three recordings of *Le Sacre du Printemps,* including the first one of Boulez; a discussion of Beethoven's late quartets, occasioned by Kerman's *The Beethoven Quartets.* Craft introduces the book with an account of Stravinsky's manner of life and work, written in 1966; and his section of it includes parts of his diaries between 1948 and 1968, his review of Virgil Thomson's *Virgil Thomson,* and his notes on Wedekind's plays and Berg's musical treatment of them in *Lulu.*

All along there have been people who have wondered whether Stravinsky or Craft had written what was published as Stravinsky's writing, and some who have been sure it could only have been Craft. But it seems to me that to read the two sections of this book is to be struck by the operation in them of two unmistakably different minds. In the new collection Stravinsky is what I found him to be in my review of the first three—"the possessor of a powerful mind that tends to go in unexpected directions, a sharp eye for human character and behavior, a grim sense of humor, a gift of pungent statement"—but even more so. The vitality of mind, the high spirits, the use of language, the wit are things to marvel at. I restrict myself, with difficulty, to one quotation, from the discussion of Beethoven's Great Fugue:

> So far as "stylistic environments" are concerned . . . and works of art as "personifications of their time," parts of the Fugue might have been incubated in a space satellite. . . . But if the music *had* entered the consciousness of its time, Modern Music would have lost some of its sting at a much earlier date, and where would we be now? (Where are we?)

The gifts for pungent statement and grim humor operate even in the descriptions of his experiences with doctors and hospitals during his grave illness in the fall of 1967; so that the reader is unprepared for the Craft diaries concerned with that illness and those experiences, which leave one shattered. The other diaries document the extraordinary and touching relation of Craft and the Stravinskys from its beginning in 1948, and some of their travels and other experiences together. In them Craft is so sharply perceptive that one is unprepared for the absurd seriousness with which he discusses the characters and dramatic ideas of the Wedekind plays and Berg's musical embodiment of them.

Reading Stravinsky's objections to details in Boulez's first recording of *Le Sacre*—among them the tempos that he considered too fast—I wondered what he thought of Boulez's recent recording of the

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work with the Cleveland Orchestra, which I had found to be quite different from the first—for one thing in its slower tempos, which brought it close to Stravinsky's own recorded performance in tension, power and grandeur, in addition to offering marvelous clarity of texture and articulation of structure. My interest was satisfied unexpectedly by a clipping I received of a letter of Stravinsky in the Los Angeles *Times* last summer (a reply to an article by the paper's music critic), in the course of which Stravinsky referred to Zubin Mehta's recording of *Le Sacre,* which he said "errs in many ways (especially in *tempi*), but is always exciting, at least—in contrast, say, to the more mature (over-mature, in fact heavily mannered) new recording by Boulez." I cannot think of a word less suitable to Boulez's performance than "mannered"; and if—as it seems from the rest of the letter—Stravinsky's use of it represented his anger over statements and actions of Boulez, it is disquieting to discover that Stravinsky's musical evaluations can be affected by such emotions. As for what angered him, "shortly after visiting me in Hollywood three years ago he talked about my latest compositions (in an interview) with unforgivable condescension, then went on to play them at a prestigious concert in Edinburgh. This was not the first proof of disingenuousness I had had of him, but it will be the last in which I have any personal connection." And in the article to which Stravinsky was replying Boulez had been quoted as "impugning the 'authenticity' of certain statements of my own" and had "apparently . . . 'suggested' that my 'arch-disciple' [Craft] has put words into my mouth." Stravinsky's comment on this was:

> . . . It would be strange indeed if we had *not* put words into, or helped to get them *out* of, each other's mouths; after all, we have been working together for 23 years. . . . What [my "arch-disciple"] is guilty of, however, is having introduced me to almost all of the new music I have heard in the past two decades . . . and not only to the new music but to the new everything else—which is why "disciple," arch or ordinary, is hardly apt. The plain truth is that anyone who admires my "Agon," my Variations, my "Requiem Canticles," owes some gratitude to the man who has sustained my creative life these last years.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

THE POSITION OF THE DRAMA CRITIC becomes queerer and queerer by the moment. There is precious little of any importance opening in our theatres, month after month, yet one believes in the theatre, clings to it, hopes for it, feels that there is something worthy buried there—and wants to believe that it is buried alive. At some point it will try to break out of its coffin, and one wishes to be there to help it come back among the living. But, in the mean time, one feels like a second-class citizen, envying one's colleagues in the other arts. In the fine arts and music, after all, there is always the good old stuff showing up, and in film and the dance something new is actually happening. (I do review films for *The New Leader,* so I get some relief there.) But the New York theatre has virtually no past on display, its present is exiguous, and living on the future makes for a very frugal diet indeed.

To be sure, some New York drama critics and reviewers have an easier time of it. Thus Stanley Kauffmann and Elizabeth Hardwick write about the theatre only when something in it moves them to write; otherwise, they concentrate on film or literature. Among those who pronounce regularly on theatre, there are two dispositions that make life easier: one is to belong happily to the rear guard and exult in the commercial claptrap Broadway spews up; the other is to enlist in the avant-garde and discover a new wonder off- or off-off-Broadway every week. There are even some reviewers who manage to straddle both these manias, and others who can drum up a "serious concern," such as the Future of the Musical, and fill their columns with worrying about it. But if you are merely interested in good theatre of any kind, if you will oppose the excesses and absurdities of both commercialism and avant-gardism in the name of certain standards of excellence, you find yourself not only disconcerted and depressed by most of what you see, but also cut off from practically all your colleagues, who, knowingly or not, adhere to some version of the aforementioned party lines.

For a number of reasons this column has fallen somewhat behind the theatrical offerings it is supposed to survey, so it seems appropriate to cover those items from last season that are still running but have not been appraised here. I must begin, however, with one that is gone. The best thing to appear on Broadway all year was *Borstal Boy,* Brendan Behan's memoirs of prison and the borstal, skilfully dramatized by Frank McMahon, an American living in Ire-

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land. It is significant that although the play won both the Drama Critics' Prize and the Tony Award, and although it and its two superb principals won a number of further honors, *Borstal Boy* could not ride out the summer. The play was a mixture of comedy and drama that worked equally well on both levels. It juxtaposed the young, inept would-be I.R.A.-bomber Behan, apprehended in Liverpool when hardly off the boat from Ireland, with the middle-aged and bitter-sweetly knowing Behan, who acts as sidelines commentator. It was thrilling to see the optimism of youth triumphing by its mere good-humoredness over assorted injustices and ill treatment; and, at the same time, the wisdom of maturity adding its wry, rueful and acerbic insights to the aggregate of life. And since Niall Toibin was not only acting superlatively as the aged-in-the-wood Behan, but also looked so astoundingly like him that the author's widow is said to have jumped upon seeing this impersonation; and since young Frank Grimes was equally expert and winning as a mere broth of a Brendan, the evening was histrionically rewarding even though the large supporting cast was uneven—the transatlantic members, as usual, surpassing the cisatlantic ones. The play was tastefully and intelligently staged by Tomas MacAnna, who also designed the minimal but sufficiently atmospheric scenery.

What was particularly significant about this dramatic event, however, was that despite its genuine artistic value and condign success abroad, its apt and absorbing blend of the humorous and serious, its historic and contemporary meaningfulness (the I.R.A. as our own militant radicals, black and white), the generally enthusiastic reviews and numerous awards, and a reasonable amount of advertising, it could not survive. It should be fairly obvious, then, that a play cannot succeed on Broadway unless it meets one of these four conditions: 1) it has major stars in it, 2) it has some kind of sensational aspect, 3) it brazenly caters to the values, religion (Jewish), or nostalgia of the theatre-going majority, 4) it is a belly-laugh a minute. Since *Borstal Boy* was only a good play in a good production, it failed. If we accept this, we must also accept that the theatre here is *in extremis:* a decent play cannot under ordinary circumstances succeed on Broadway; off-Broadway probably could not, for snobbish as well as economic reasons, exist without Broadway; and off-off-Broadway by itself could not attract more than committed avant-gardists and a few thrill-seekers, which is not enough to keep a theatre going.

The most pseudo-encouraging event in the late spring of 1969 was the applauded arrival of *Company,* a musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and a book by George Furth, based on some short plays of his that were, apparently, recast to the specifications of Sondheim and Harold Prince, the producer-director. *Company* tells the story—in what was generally considered highly in-

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novative dramatic and musical terms—of marital and nonmarital relations (pre-, extra-, and, as it were, contramarital) in Manhattan, more specifically on the chic Upper East Side. The protagonist, Robert, is a desirable bachelor in his mid-thirties, very much badgered and lured into marriage, but put off by the grim connubial relations of five pairs of friends, and by the ease with which he acquires girls thanks to his attractiveness, charm, sophistication, elegant apartment, and other virtues with which the authors and director deck out their imaginary alter ego.

The importance of the show—an alleged new lease of life for the musical—lies in its supposedly novel musical style, and in the fact that its cast of fourteen sings, dances and acts in a series of connected skits, the usual story line being dispensed with much as the customary singing and dancing chorus. But, unfortunately, the five couples are all types with archetypal flaws: alcohol, trying to swing on pot, getting divorced only to stay together as lovers, ending a long affair with getting married only to have the bride skip out on the way to church, etc. etc. All these failings are schematic plot devices, and develop neither characters nor situations. There are some bright lines in the book, but they are bright rather than perceptive, clever rather than illuminating, extremely parochial (East Sixties, show business, middle-aged and middle-class but ever so with-it) and, finally, too few and far between.

Sondheim's lyrics are up to his best, which is to say as sharpened scintillant (or sick) as Broadway musical comedy has to offer; but his music is timorous in its reaching after innovation: a whiff of rock here, a bit of atonality there, just enough to create a slight *frisson* such as one might get from watching lions from an observation tower in an African game sanctuary. The actual innovation is to be found in Boris Aronson's set, which, against a background of acrophiliac skyscrapers presents their stylized guts in the shape of gleaming platforms among sleek girders along which little pieces of the floor ascend and descend—a veritable forest of skeletal elevators. With people posted on various levels of this larger-than-playroom-size erector set, or traveling up and down while delivering their songs and cute sayings (*bonbon mots?*), the effect is stylish and fascinating, and does convey a sense of some sort of newness in the theatre. It is heartening to see such an old-timer as Aronson, whose decor was always substantial but also ponderous and old-fashioned, daring to undertake such a graceful and relatively radical departure, and fully succeeding.

The main weakness of *Company* is its protagonist, who is mostly a passive bystander, sometimes less than innocent but always less than interesting. It is of as little concern to us whether he becomes sold on marriage or lingers on in bachelorhood (as he, at last, impenitently does) as it is whether the brawling, bitchy, arch or

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inept couples that surround him stay together, separate, or vanish into the not so much thinner air. Hal Prince directed the show acceptably, albeit with the set doing most of his work for him; among the performers, there were quite a few good ones, although Dean Jones, as Robert, remained inconspicuous beyond the line of duty. I especially liked Susan Browning as a scatterbrained airline stewardess and Beth Howland as an even newer Héloïse of a mistress refusing to become a wife. Michael Bennett's dances, except for a too obviously derivative solo for the talented Donna McKechnie, were extremely fetching in their simplicity fraught with psychosociological overtones. But, finally, *Company* is at its best where it is least daring, in a rousingly reactionary show tune called "Side by Side by Side," or in an adroitly traditional patter song, "Getting Married Today." Real innovation takes risks; Sondheim, Prince & *Company* are much too prudent to take any.

A musical that maintains itself successfully, without being in the least innovative, is *Applause,* an adaptation of the film *All About Eve*—or, because of unavailability of the rights to the film, of the story on which it was based. The book and lyrics are by Comden and Green, the music is by Charles Strouse, the choreography (quite lively) and the staging (quite unlively) are both by Ronald Field. This is your prototypical average musical, which in a lean season takes on the proportions of grandeur for a musical-hungry crowd. It brought Lauren Bacall to the singing and dancing stage, where she acquitted herself admirably for philistine or campy tastes, and passably for the rest.

A much better, fresher and more meaningful musical is to be found off-Broadway: *The Me Nobody Knows,* adapted from a book by the same title, a collection of poems and prose compositions by school children between the ages of seven and seventeen in ghetto districts. A part of this material was arranged into a loose concatenation of songs and brief monologues or dialogues and interspersed with cheekily down-to-earth dances by Patricia Birsh, dances that are extensions of street games. Will Holt fiddled a little with some of the texts to convert them into lyrics, and Gary William Friedman wrote a score for them that is so good you hardly notice that it is rock. Robert H. Livingston's staging is sensibly plain, and the rest is up to a dozen youngsters, eight of them Negro or Puerto Rican, almost all of them talented, and some six or seven of them first-rate professionals. I single out Northern Calloway, Beverly Ann Bremers, and eleven-year-old Douglas Grant. The mood shuttles between drama and comedy, but, in a sense, is always simultaneously drama and comedy, for though these kids surmount most of the horrors they face, which is joyous, the mere fact that they should have to tangle with them is unutterably sad. *The Me Nobody Knows* gets it all across with the directness, illiterate poetry,

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touching unadornment, flashes of extraordinary originality, spontaneity even in banality, which make the writings of children, like the drawings of cavemen, what the sight of the dawn is to eyes accustomed to sleep till noon.

Somewhat older, and considerably worse, children are to be found in Robert Marasco's *Child's Play,* probably the only 1970 dramatic offering to emerge as a hit on Broadway. This is a rather pretentious affair about good and evil epitomized by two teachers in a Catholic boys' school, a good and an evil that mutually destroy each other, much as in *Billy Budd,* only here the good at first appears to be the bad, and vice versa. This conflict is supposed to have a fell effect on the pupils, who perform horrors of sadistic and masochistic mutilation upon one another or themselves. There is much kitchen-sink metaphysicizing *à la* Graham or Julien Green(e) among the various priestly or lay members of the faculty, which includes a young, innocent gym teacher and a bibulously cynical young priest (tidily played by Ken Howard and David Rounds, respectively). There are overtones also of Henry James and Joseph Conrad; Marasco, who himself taught at such a school, seems to be digesting two years' worth of the curriculum in this his first play. It comes out, as I remarked elsewhere, as Claudel rewritten by Chayefsky.

Child's Play is full of glaring improbabilities that cannot be explained away with recourse to slogans like "symbolism" or "heightened realism." One simply does not accept a psychopathic teacher's defying detection for thirty years, or another's fundamental goodness remaining unsuspected for decades. Even Tertullian's faith would be taxed by a school teaming with perverted teen-aged martyrs, their autos-da-fé unleashed by a mere dimly sensed presence of cosmic injustice embodied in the rival teachers. And why should the mysterious carnage have waited so long to burst forth, and why, again, must it reach the proportions it does before it is comprehended and combatted? But, at least, Marasco's dialogue is generally literate, captures the flavor of a seedily waspish faculty room, and tends to avoid the obvious. There may be real talent here if it ever gets beyond this first stage of overstylized autobiography into the free field of untrammeled creation.

What is truly notable about the production is the performance of Fritz Weaver as the maligned martinet, the basically pathetic Classics teacher. It starts on a high level of crotchetiness verging on hysteria, then, in defiance of probability, keeps building on it, though just sustaining it would be a remarkable enough accomplishment. The voice is a tormented trumpeting, almost providing the words with a musical score, and the movements seem to be carved out of a large block of pain. There is an awesome deliberateness about it all, bordering on overelaboration, but there is something wonderful about acting that goes beyond truth into a sheer display of

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mastery over a medium, like the *entrechat dix* Nijinsky would put in where ordinary dancers did a mere *six*. By contrast, Pat Hingle's assured but routinely realistic performance as the popular, easy-going, seemingly good teacher is just mellowed Method acting, fluent and unmemorable. Moreover, Hingle has given this same bumptious performance so many times by now that one feels one is watching not Hingle but some comic doing an impersonation of him. Jo Mielziner's set has the right combination of massiveness, mysteriousness, and motheatenness, but Joseph Hardy's staging is calculatedly greedy for stunning effects.

Off-Broadway, Hardy has directed the last play of the late Joe Orton, *What the Butler Saw,* and put the finishing—and, alas, diminishing—touches on the unfinished second act. Orton was a very promising, developing English playwright whose domain was the confluence of satire, absurdism and camp. His manner was part homosexual protest, part magnificently morbid imagination, part cynical laughter, and there was marked improvement from play to play until a homosexual roommate's bludgeon descended before the 34-year-old playwright could complete his third full-length work. Nevertheless, *What the Butler Saw,* at least in its first half, could be great, grating fun—showing a society with every one of its moral values stood on its head, and people hanging upside down, like sloths or bats, to make it all seem right side up—but as Hardy has cast and staged it, it does not work. The actors either do not look their parts, or do not sound them (genteel British), or cannot act—most notably in the case of an old acting teacher of his whom Hardy has cast in a key role, and who cannot even remember his lines, much less deliver them properly. Furthermore, Hardy does not maintain a fast enough tempo, and, worse yet, does not have his actors behave as if they meant what they are doing. Now the cardinal rule of farce is that the actors must not think of themselves as inhabiting some world of brittle make-believe, but must play the screamingly funny, outrageous, preposterous situations in dead earnest. Failing that, one invites bloodless pastiche, which is just what Hardy got.

Another budding Hardy perennial is the Broadway attraction, *Bob and Ray: The Two and Only,* perhaps the most curious of all current theatrical phenomena. As will be recalled, Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding were Boston disk jockeys who in the late forties started clowning around with mock interviews, and gradually developed this into a fifteen-minute comedy spot. They invented an imaginary network on which fictitious interviewers spoke with imaginary oddballs, and the result, a gentle ribbing of radio programming and a few related human foibles made for a pleasant change from the pop tunes and whatever else befoulded the airwaves in the forties and fifties. But as Bob and Ray became a national institution, and as television came in, the comedy team transmigrated into television, and this higher (or

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lower) avatar proved too much for them. For one thing, they were vocal comedians, if they were anything; for another, theirs was a low-key humor solipsistically poking fun at their particular medium: radio (and later TV), with its giveaway shows, street-corner interviews, boring studio guests, inefficient news coverage, etc.—as if the outside world barely mattered. And to the small extent that it did, it was a world of the fifties, before the deluge. Some of its phenomena still existed, but there were now greater follies, monstrosities, cataclysms to go after; besides, the basic thrust of humor had changed, in the days of Lenny Bruce and after, to something more relevant, more political, more surreal (as were the targets themselves) than the essentially Tarkingtonian approach of our New England disk jockeys.

But though a failure with their own TV program, Bob and Ray became highly successful with their voiceover TV commercials, as the voices of the Piel Brothers, for example, and of Skippy Peanut Butter. And there they might have stayed if the hard times of Broadway and the current nostrum, catering to the solid burghers' nostalgia, had not exhumed them and laid them out in state—actually a state of decomposition—on the stage of the Golden Theatre. The old jokes, if they ever were funny, certainly are not so any more—a producer named T. Carleton Messy, for instance, who is responsible for a Messy Production; and in the overlarge setting of a proscenium stage, the result is as piddling as an exhibition of matchbook covers at the Metropolitan Museum. Saddest of all, Bob and Ray have only three facial expressions between the two of them, and Hardy's idea of sometimes putting Ray or Bob on closed-circuit television, his facelessness magnified by an on-stage screen, merely emphasizes the visual nullity. Hardy's other bright idea is to have had the set designer fill the stage with thirties and forties paraphernalia, conspicuous among which are antiquated radios, and to have all this motley junk remain there, absolutely untouched, throughout the show. To me, this suggested that if the bric-à-brac is not part of the show, Bob and Ray must be part of the bric-à-brac. Nevertheless, *Bob and Ray: The Two and Only* got rave reviews and seem to enchant their guffawing audiences, and the moral of the story is that if this can pass for theatre, what need is there for the real thing?

Still, theatre keeps popping up, modestly and almost inconspicuously, and encouraging us—perhaps foolishly—to hope. There is the case of Paul Zindel's *The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds,* a rather tricky title that sounds dragged in by its stamens, but actually makes sense. This is a domestic tragicomedy about an abandoned, neurotic, bitter mother, living in barely genteel poverty with her two high-school-age daughters: one a neurotically shy, plain but profound girl, with a passion and aptitude for science; the other a sexy, shallow extrovert who, moreover, is on the fringe of madness and has already been institutionalized once. The interaction of these three

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characters—with forays into their past, their private lives, school activities, relationships to a pet rabbit and a pathetic, senile hag whom they keep on as a boarder—constitutes the minuscule yet not inconsequential action of the play. Zindel is clearly influenced by Tennessee Williams, and more remotely by O'Neill and Miller, but these influences do not choke out his originality. The young dramatist has turned this shabby little household into the battleground of the flesh and the spirit; here love turned into hatred, bovine self-love and a love so unselfish yet timorous it can barely be heard wrestle with one another—unhealthiness makes war on the possibility of health.

The play is sensitive and intelligent and keeps bursting out of its confined setting into an emotional spaciousness that Melvin Bernhardt's staging deftly conjures up before us. And the performances, at least two of them, are remarkable. There is Sada Thompson's cynically undermining mother, her love corroded by the gelid selfishness of those who feel cheated by life. Quietly, tyrannically, as often with reasonable-sounding solicitude as with iciness or outbursts, she destroys everyone and everything, herself amply included. Just about equally good is Pamela Payton-Wright as the delicate, gifted, thwarted daughter, the butt of her mother's envy—a characterization so humble, frail yet indomitable, as to remind me, even more than of the marigolds with which the author compares the girl, of those tiny, improbable flowers that manage to sprout from the crevices of rocks, or from the even stonier pavement of cities.

Another off-Broadway production of value and distinction is *Boesman and Lena,* the final section of a trilogy about South Africa's outcasts and losers, by Athol Fugard, a white South African playwright. *Blood Knot* dealt with the blacks, *Hello and Goodbye* with the whites, and this play, by far the best of the three, with the in-betweens, the coloreds. These products of Dutch fornications with native women are now equally excluded from fellowship with the whites and the blacks. Boesman and Lena are a middle-aged "colored" couple of itinerant scroungers, living off the prawns they hunt on the mudflats of a number of rivers whose beds form the boundaries of their world. A few measly towns in which they trade with the whites before whom they cringe are the circuit around which these paltry existences keep shuffling. Their abode is a shack they continually set up and disassemble and carry about on their backs; even a snail is not obliged constantly to dismantle and re-erect its domicile, which, besides, is much better constructed.

The only solace for these wretches is quarreling with each other; more precisely, a fight between the stolidly taciturn Boesman's fists and Lena's garrulous tongue. The pair are too old and tired for love, and love, even if it could survive that round of humiliations, deprivations and, worst of all, repetitions that is their life, could not afford them the desperately needed outlet for their great bottled-up rage.

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What Fugard has accomplished—and it is no mean trick—is to have made an event out of the eventlessness of these lives by means of Lena's attempted rebellion when Boesman brutalizes a wretched old Kaffir who has come to their campfire to die. For in this old man who stumbles upon them in the night, with whom language barriers make communication impossible (though Lena, touchingly, gets him to repeat her name), Lena has found someone even more miserable than herself. When, deprived as she is of faith and hope, Boesman would deny her her last chance at charity, she erupts.

In this eruption, as well as in the more subduedly aching scenes surrounding it, the play gives us a glimpse of hell on earth in the most nearly objective terms in which such harrowing injustice can be evoked. Fugard manages, furthermore, the difficult feat of finding a language for Lena that is neither flatly naturalistic nor unduly and unconvincingly poeticized; that there are a few lapses is not surprising —what is surprising is that they are so few. The play is really Lena's monologue and monody that astoundingly eschews monotony. For this we must thank also Ruby Dee's extraordinary performance, sounding depths one would not have suspected within this actress's reach, and maintaining an exemplary humanity in abjection, an undercurrent of melody in the shrill stream of complaint. There is even an ounce of hopefulness in the play: the cloddish Boesman, from whom she finally cannot detach herself, may—just barely may—realize something of Lena's worth, her dignity, her rights. John Berry has directed the play with straightforwardness and eloquence, and Boesman was well played by James Earl Jones, and is probably even better played now by Zakes Mokae, his genuinely South African replacement.

An infinitely less happy event, off-off-Broadway, is a wildly overpraised, garishly misguided version of *Alice in Wonderland* put on by the archly named Manhattan Project, a heavily subsidized ex-N.Y.U. group under the direction of André Gregory. This aggregation rehearsed its one measly offering for some two years, the first of its many similarities with, nay, apings of Grotowski's Polish Laboratory Theatre. For Gregory is a follower of the Polish fanatic and fantast, and was before that a devotee of Jan Kott, another Polish theatrical thaumaturge; he has a fairly extensive background in regional and avant-garde theatre, and his work has a certain cleverness and proficiency, though it is essentially derivative.

In the present case, the two Lewis Carroll books have been used—cut up but not substantially changed—as a scenario for the sort of combination dance-pantomime-improvisation-kiddies' party that one expects from true Grotowskiites. The main contribution, besides the various mime elements and the diverse noises made by the cast, is the emphasis on external and internal grubbiness. Externally, this means that the two girls in the group, besides being thoroughly unattractive,

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are unkempt, dressed in sad rags, or whatever the opposite of glad rags is, and race and wallow around the stage and auditorium fulfilling the function of dust mops. The four boys, besides being either kewpie dolls or sad sacks, are as begrimed, bedraggled and yokelish as antiaestheticism can make them. Most of the performers have unprepossessing accents—the Alice of Angela Pietropinto, for example, speaks with a Bronx accent—and, in genuine Grotowskian fashion, don't know much about how to read lines. There is an interesting visual concept here and there, as in the group grope that represents Alice's descent down the rabbit hole, or in the manner in which four bowed backs form a mushroom for the caterpillar to sit on, the twisted arm of one of the bowed fellows becoming the caterpillar's hookah. Internally, however, the show revels in turning Carroll's world into a psychopathic or social morass—not in the subtle way of Empsonian analysis but as instant muckraking, not so much for the sake of the raking as out of love for the muck. Gregory's *Alice in Wonderland* is a shallow cataloguing of human meanness and sickness seen through a jaundiced eye, whereas Carroll's was a child's-eye view of the human condition, nastiness *and* decency included.

Equally gimmicky, though in a different way, is Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.'s *Happy Birthday, Wanda June*. This is an old play rewritten, and it may be that the old and the new are at loggerheads within it; in any case, the thing huffs and sputters but does not move. The conceit here is that Harold Ryan, who is both Hemingway and Ulysses, returns to his fourth wife, Penelope, from an Amazon safari on which he is believed to have died. Ryan is a big-game hunter, a warrior, a bullying womanizer, a clever beast, and a hero to all people except those who know him. Vonnegut is debunking the myth of the hero, but for this neither Ulysses, who was more of a Machiavel, nor Hemingway, who in due time duly debunked himself, is the right symbol; and uneasily grafted together, Ulysses and Hemingway are more mess than myth. Nor is there much comic mileage to be gotten from a wife who was a carhop but is now studying for an M.A. in English literature, and from her two suitors. One is a psychiatrist who represents the antiwar, passive-resistance, reason-above-violence attitudes Vonnegut approves of, but, deliberately or not, makes as ridiculous as what he condemns; the other is a vacuum-cleaner salesman and overgrown boy scout, meant to be ridiculous but emerging more lovable than the author wants him to be. There is also a little Telemachus, who, in Vonnegut's youth-oriented way, is the voice of good sense, and rather a bore. To guild a lily that is already pure ormolu, Vonnegut introduces the man who dropped the bomb on Nagasaki as a yet paltrier form of supposititious heroism, and also, for the sheer hell of it, a number of scenes in heaven, where everybody from Christ down plays shuffleboard. Up there, an alcoholic ex-wife of Ryan's, an infamous Nazi officer whom Ryan killed in the war, and Wanda June, an

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irrelevant little girl run over by an ice-cream truck on her birthday, form a Harold Ryan fan club complete with Harold Ryan jackets. It all comes to no more than some funny but widely scattered lines and sight gags, which could as easily have been concocted by a commune of smart college dropouts as by one middle-aged novelist. The production is generally inept, badly directed, and with good acting only in one or two minor parts.

Heroism, *esprit de corps,* and the sunsetless British Empire all get a going over—but only once over lightly—in Barry England's *Conduct Unbecoming,* the latest London import on Broadway. This typically boulevard play concerns foul goings-on in an Indian Army regiment in the late 1800's; it is part army comedy with anti-establishment overtones, part courtroom melodrama (fairly tense but, regrettably, riddled with improbabilities), part throwback to *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer* despite all its pretense of debunking. Nevertheless, it is quite well acted on the whole, and tidily—perhaps too tidily—directed by Val May. Probably the weakest thing about the play is the concluding revelation: preposterously tossing out questions of psychopathology which, I would think, cannot be casually introduced at the end, left unexamined and unevaluated, and hastily cut off by the final curtain.

A similarly skilful commercial product, only this time American and a musical, is *The Rothschilds,* an adaptation of Frederic Morton's bestseller by Sherman Yellen (book), Jerry Bock (music), and Sheldon Harnick (lyrics). The latter two were responsible for, among other things, *Fiddler on the Roof,* to which this show with its intermittent Jewish twang in words and music bears marked similarity. The breadth of its scope as well as the desire to simplify all that history for the musical stage, make of *The Rothschilds* a bit of a pageant, with all that implies of thinness and schematism. Yet Yellen's book is witty, with sizable sections of very bright dialogue, and there are at least three wholly satisfying performances: Hal Linden's as Mayer, the father of the financial flock; Paul Hecht's as Nathan, the London Rothschild and solid center of the second-generation quincunx; and Jill Clayburgh's, as the delicious girl Nathan marries. Michael Kidd's staging and choreography, though a bit on the skimpy side, are not unfitting; the tunes and lyrics (except for a number sung partly in embarrassing French) are good Orhbach copies of *haute couture,* and as for the handsome scenery and costumes by John Bury, let *The Rothschilds* wear them in good health. The romance of money may not be the most appetizing subject in the world, but the show, partly by joking about it and partly by glossing things over, manages to make some glitter out of all that gold.

Joseph Papp's Public Theatre began the fall season with a double-decker: Pinero's *Trelawny of the "Wells"* presented upstairs, and a new play, Dennis J. Reardon's *The Happiness Cage* given down-

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stairs. The Reardon play, which its young author claims to be based on fact, concerns experiments at a veterans' hospital conducted under army auspices. Dying or barely sick veterans, willing or unwilling, are cajoled or forced into having a metal plate implanted in their brains, and their thoughts controlled electronically so as to make the men malleable, ordinary, and happy while being exploited. In the light of certain recent experiments with apes, and in view of other signposts sprouting in our unhappy society, the play is on to an important issue, whether or not it is strictly based on fact. The topic is handled very well, in the main, and, for such a young author, with astonishing assurance in dialogue, psychology, dramatic interest, and development of even minor characters. True, toward the end, things become unbelievable; true, the last scene does not have the forcefulness it needs. But the set design, staging, and, above all, the excellent acting mitigate most of these weaknesses. As a brutish yet oddly likable hillbilly soldier, Ronnie Cox gives an extraordinarily moving performance, precisely because it does not play on our sympathies; but all the others, with the exception of Paul Sparer as the general, are very good, too. Typically, the play got a mixed critical reception and little audience support.

As for *Trelawny,* it is a well-carpentered play by a second-rate mind, and Pinero's insistence that the 1860's be evoked with all their ludicrous fashions in clothing and furniture does not lessen the double nostalgia, about the past and about the good old theatre, which permeates the play. The subject, in fact, is the gypsy life of the stage versus the solid respectability of Cavendish Square, and I need hardly tell you which one wins out. I can ascribe it only to disingenuousness on Shaw's part that he praised *Trelawny* in his review of its 1898 première: the sort of accolade one gives to a lesser but highly popular competitor to prove what a good sport one is. Yet Shaw objected to Dion Boucicault's conventional way of turning Sir William Gower into a stage stereotype of the old man (which, in the current revival, George Bartenieff does with a vengeance), and remarked that "it is no more like a real old man than a worn-out billiard table is like a meadow." I am afraid that Pinero's view of life resembles reality about as much as a brand new billiard table does a meadow; and to give the play an amateurish, un-British, in all but Theoni V. Aldredge's costumes, imprecise and unevocative production, makes it all rather like a billiard table with the felt ripped off.

If the reader, glancing back over this column, should conclude that things in the theatre aren't as bad as all that, after all, I beg him to bear in mind that I have passed over in silence atrocities without number, imbecilities that seem to get stupider every season, of which I can say only what Kurtz said after whatever it was *he* saw, "The horror! The horror!" Upon which he, at least, had to see no more.

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Reviews

VERNON YOUNG

October Thoughts

PROBABLY THE WORST THAT CAN BE SAID about Chinese poetry was said by M. Jacques Maritain when he observed that Chinese *painting* remained dominated by the supremacy of things over the self; in his view, this subordination led the Chinese into their passion for codifying their art and produced an academicism

> no less boring than our own: hence those bamboos invariably stern in their never-yielding flexibility, those plum-trees invariably courageous because they blossom in winter, those orchids invariably pure because they display their beauty in solitude, those chrysanthemums invariably noble because they have the mind of a hermit, those mountains invariably smiling in spring and sleeping in winter . . . and those generals invariably brave.[1]

One smiles at his little joke while wondering, at the same time, how a mind educated in the "Universal Church" can be so parochial. Assuming that Oriental art were as unvarying as a quick deceptive survey might suggest, is it not essential to the modern awareness to recognize that *time* is a cultural conception and that from our conceptions of time our several values and our expressive forms are radically shaped? If ever a sustained conviction of *permanence* was authorized by the ineluctable return of the same ills, the same blessings and the same resources for reconciling them, it must have been in China, from the time of its social origins to around 1930 A.D. The serenity with which these implacable cycles were suffered is what impresses me in two volumes of Chinese poetry I have at hand,[2] between them bridging fourteen centuries (with a single poem from the twentieth century added). Not being a Sinologist I can scarcely evaluate these poems, I can only appreciate them. I can murmur that the translations, as *poetry,* of Ch'en and Bullock *seem* to be more creative than those of Ayling and Mackintosh; that in any case both collections are scholarly; that the books, themselves, as objects, are lovable because they are well-made and please the eye (the Tuttle volume especially); that if it were not for the obligations towards my own cultural dynamic I might abandon the remainder of forty

[1] Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (Pantheon, 1953).

[2] A FURTHER COLLECTION OF CHINESE LYRICS, translated by *Alan Ayling* and *Duncan Mackintosh*. Vanderbilt University Press. $7.50. POEMS OF SOLITUDE, translated from the Chinese by *Jerome Ch'en* and *Michael Bullock*. Charles E. Tuttle. $5.25.

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volumes from which I made my selection and simply float on this majestic flood through an unending landscape of willows and far-off mountains, transmuting my urbane and neurotic responses into dignity of heart and quiet gratitude for a cup of wine, the slow opening of a lotus, the cries of monkeys rising from the depths of a valley and the inexplicable joy of reflecting: "When the autumn comes/ it rains much on the mountain;/ No one picks up the falling leaves." A sad postscript follows: when a future race sifts our remains it will probably not congratulate us on the gift in which we take greatest pride—our restless versatility.

In *Poems of Solitude* there is a magnificent elegy, "The Ruined City," by Pao Chao (c. 459). The poet defines the setting in Stanza I, depicts the golden past in Stanza II, paints the desolation of nature and of the courts of men in Stanzas III and IV, crystallizes the vision in a final, shorter stanza.

> The greatest displeasure of the largest number
> Is the law of nature.
> For this ruined city,
> I play the lute and sing:
> "As the north wind hurries on
> the battlements freeze.
> They tower over the plain
> where are neither roads nor field-paths.
> For a thousand years and a myriad generations,
> I shall watch you to the end in silence."

We live again in a time of the ruined city and as our poets increasingly tune their lutes to sing of north winds and the vertical invasions by incendiaries beneath our battlements many are seeking an Orient of the mind in which they can endure. (Quite as many are joining the invaders but I shall not be reviewing any of them because they are bad poets.)

For Ivan V. Lalic[3] the ruined city is "Byzantium," or Dubrovnik or Smederevo; his China is the eastern Mediterranean of antique myth. This poet's subject is, in the most profound sense, *recovery*. When "piecing [his] homeland together/ little by little," he is compelled to reconstruct from the stones and dreams of the oldest layers, since "Yugoslavia" is a word, a modern manufacture, a political contrivance, not an architecture of ancient heritage. "Ash of tongue/ in a dead mouth/ is honey in a hollow tree/ to the lips/ of the chronicler/ History without its stones/ is dead. . . ." (from "In Praise of Dubrovnik"). These poems (selected, 1956-1959) are musical and tragic, drawn from deep and abundant wells in Tyrrhenian archipelagoes of the mind. In them Lalic confronts the poet's eternal defeat and his unextinguished glories. "The King and the Singer" is his perfect image of the ceaseless reciprocity and warfare between

[3] FIRE GARDENS, by *Ivan V. Lalic,* trans. *Charles Simic* and *C. W. Truesdale.* New Rivers Press. $3.00.

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art and empire: by awakening imagination, the poet thereby disturbs the kingdom, sealing his own doom as well as the king's.

> You have to be the stronger one—
> my destiny is to endure this song,
> this fire, this clownsuit of poetry
>
> . . . .
> Every song in which your appetite
> sees roses or the delicate forged gold
> of vowels, and I my death
>
> . . . .
> And so in the end, your Excellency,
> we are powerless, both of us:
> From the wedding of this song
> comes a heaven, a more dangerous earth,
> and the multitudes we cannot control.

I think I have read no poems of our day, of which the center is Memory, more beautiful than these; they are profuse with single phrases or brief, plangent figures that stir the hair.

> The wind carries the fragrance
> of dolphins axed on a deck.
>
> . . . .
> language remembers voices
> hovering with pollen
> over the first shore
>
> . . . .
> with breath firm and resolute
> like a glassblower before his fire
> who remembers a beauty he never learned
>
> . . . .
> And the password is rusting in his mouth
> like a key in a useless keyhole

They are not meant to be plucked like that from their burning bushes. I despair of naming his "best" poems: each is an achieved incantation, conjuring an ironic metaphor of gods, heroes and saints. To all of them Charles Simic has added a sensitive and informing preface and, with C. W. Truesdale, has made translations (the first into English) which are, for all I know, perfect; if I had been told the poems were by a "Yugoslav" writing our language I would have accepted the claim. Lalic is an archangel of verse, restoring to the ruined city the "delicate forged gold" of remembrance.

Octavio Paz, in his poetry as in his theory, is the opposite of all this. There is nothing in his *Eagle or Sun?*,[4] written twenty years ago

[4] *Aguila o Sol?* (Eagle or Sun?), by *Octavio Paz*, trans. Eliot Weinberger. October House. $6.50.

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and newly translated by Eliot Weinberger, of Chinese piety, Greek equipoise, Byzantine craftmanship or Moslem resignation; no sense of poetry as wisdom, no awed concession to a definition of history in which ideals were shaped; all is chaos, the screaming "I," orgasms of a Marsyas, self-immolation, sadism and echolalia. Here is a sample:

> Vomit of words, gonorrhea of the infected language, eaten and reeaten with rotted teeth. . . . Today I dream a language of knives and beaks, of acids and flames. A language of whips. To execrate, exasperate, excommunicate, expel, expatriate, extrude, exturbate, excorporate, expurgate, excoriate, exhull, express, expectorate, exulcerate, excremate (the sacraments), extortionate, extenuate (the silence), expiate.
>
> A language that cuts off breathing. . . .

It does, indeed. In the preface to his earlier anthology of Mexican poetry (1958), Paz declared that the poet always sought "to elude the tyranny of history. . . . There can be no poetry without history but poetry has no other mission than to transmit history. And therefore the only true revolutionary poetry is apocalyptic poetry." His *and therefore* is the confounding link in this chain. One can only conclude that Paz, himself, has been unable to elude the "tyranny" of history, since in his visions history has produced principally a confusion of the senses; *therefore,* the only true poetry is the kind he finds himself writing.

Paz continues to affirm "the tradition of severance" with his introduction to *New Poetry of Mexico*[5] but I gather that the selections, after many arguments among the coadjutors, are more catholic than his preferred bias. Any impression, in a few sentences, of seventy-odd poems from twenty-four mid-century Mexican poets, is bound to be misleading. As one might expect in such an assemblage, the selections are individually various, while collectively they have the pungency, the languor and the bursts of smiling ferocity we are familiar with as the Mexican scene. The poets reveal a search opposite to that in other modern literatures, as Señor Paz explains, for they are attempting to return from the international level through the national to the regional, instead of taking the reverse journey. What one misses, perhaps, with exceptions in Salvador Novo, Carlos Pellicer and in the prose poetry of Juan José Arreola, is mind astringently feeling the limits of what it observes. The translations are uniformly able; they do not read as translations. But I cannot bear false witness. I was dazzled by much in this volume yet I was not moved by a single poem.

In *Post-War Polish Poetry*[6] I was deeply moved on nearly every page. The editor and principal translator is Czeslaw Milosz, author of

[5] NEW POETRY OF MEXICO, selected, with notes, by *Octavio Paz, Ali Chumacero, José Emilio Pacheco, Homero Aridjis.* Bilingual edition edited by *Mark Strand.* E. P. Dutton. $10.00.

[6] POST-WAR POLISH POETRY, edited and translated by *Czeslaw Milosz.* Penguin Books. $1.25.

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The Captive Mind, still, in my opinion, the definitive short statement of the Central-European tragedy. Milosz, wonderful man, protests, "I am not a native English speaker and I do not trust my ear. . . ." Incredible! He has a great ear. It is characteristic of him that he should have, himself, written "What is poetry which does not save/ Nations or people?/ A connivance with official lies,/ A song of drunkards whose throats will be cut in a moment,/ Readings for sophomore girls," . . . ; characteristic that his selections do not strictly accord with this conviction; characteristic, perhaps, that in this edition he has added a warning note on the perils of irony. (Residence in the U.S.A., where irony is either unrecognized or unwelcome, may be partly responsible.) But Western thought descends from Socrates, I mumble. Meanwhile, Milosz has not repudiated this poem, his own, first published in 1964:

> If I had to show what the world is for me
> I would take a hamster or a hedgehog or a mole
> and place him in a theatre seat one evening
> and, bringing my ear close to his humid snout,
> would listen to what he says about the spotlights,
> sounds of the music, and movements of the dance.

(Remarkable—in nearly all the contemporary poets I have been reading *the mole* is a common visitor.) Since most of the writers in this book (the Penguin reprint of a collection published in 1965) are survivors from an apocalypse, they have been spared the conceit of attempting to write "apocalyptic poetry." I expect they would unanimously reject both our admiration and our pity. Tadeuz Rozewicz tells us, "Forget about us/ about our generation/ live like human beings/ forget about us . . . don't ask about our youth/ leave us alone." Were I faced with the challenge of summarizing these twenty-one poets in a word, I could meet it. The word is *Hamlet*—so long as we remember the full spectrum of the prince's temperament: the worms and the exaltation. Like the Russians of the early nineteenth century, Polish intellectuals have been swaddled in Hamlet's cloak. On them it looks good. From the somewhat "Chinese" poems of Leopold Staff (1878-1957) to the erudite sarcasms of the contemporary, Bryll, the predominant tone is that of the sardonic, unconfined by subject matter, notably intellectual, matured in history, warmed by the weird and by a prevailing love of the fine arts. In desperation, I cite a single stanza from a single poem, Zbigniew Herbert's great "Elegy of Fortinbras":

> Anyhow you had to perish Hamlet you were not for life
> you believed in crystal notions not in human clay
> always twitching as if asleep you hunted chimeras
> wolfishly you crunched the air only to vomit
> you knew no human thing you did not know even how
> to breathe

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Not to be able to quote from at least ten other poets in this slim book is a punishment.

I pray to God (our God, the God of the West): if we must have enemies, let them be poets so that I have a half-chance to forgive them—and please, God, give them *translators.* It should be good news that Alexander Blok, undoubtedly Russia's greatest modern poet, has been represented in a new volume by more poems than have ever been translated before, but it takes no knowledge of Russian and no exquisite ear for poetry to realize that in this collection[7] there are monstrous infelicities on every page. I mention the book only because it *indicates* the surprising range of Blok's resources. The greatest damage is done to such chiliastic poems as "Russia" (1906), "Russia and I" (1910), "Shamelessly, Endlessly Sinning" (1914), "The Twelve" (1918) and "The Scythians" (1918). I *know* that far better translations than these have been made, though I can't immediately locate the references to prove it. I read these poems over the air in 1945. They were blood-curdling. I could never read the versions of Stallworthy and France on the air.

Alexander Blok helped sing into the world that Russia which set its branding-iron on Horst Bienek[8] and burned him into shrivelled song. The experience and the poems are here so coterminous as to outlaw criticism. Arrested at the age of 21 on a political charge in East Berlin, sentenced to twenty-five years of forced labor (he was freed after six by an amnesty) in a Russian polar region with a name like a wolf-god's, Vorkuta, Bienek's subject is of course the irreducible one: living death, fires going out, syllables dying on the tongue, the herd march by daylight, machine-guns and snow and the corporal punishment of *memory* in a "Landscape of ashes/ Where drums bewilder/ Rusty grass which/ Clinks in the ice-wind. . . . From the moss of the tundra/ Springs a bizarre/ And unsown jungle/ Of barbed wire." Inconceivable: how a man survives it; how he makes poems from it. "Where pain is," he writes, in a poem to Nelly Sachs, "there is room for nothing else." Yet he finds room. Each image, each poem, drops onto the page like an iron filing. The poems have a charred, formal beauty. And they are admirably translated. This Unicorn German Series is a commendable enterprise; I hope it prospers.

While reading the Poles and Bienek, I looked into the television screen during a rest halt, to be confronted with an American film actor, Elliot Gould, who looks like Groucho Marx; he was earnestly telling an interviewer that he had an "identity problem." This made me feel ill for some hours. There is no lack of evidence, in several directions, that many Americans are losing their nerve. And well

[7] THE TWELVE AND OTHER POEMS, by *Alexander Blok,* trans. *Jon Stallworthy* and *Peter France.* Oxford University Press. $5.75.

[8] HORST BIENEK, trans. by *Ruth* and *Matthew Mead.* Unicorn Press. $1.50.

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they might, in a society which has overthrown laws. Among the poets, the women curl up in themselves, or strike out to show how masculine-responsible they are. The males react variously, depending on their age, the quality of their self-education (since the other kind is clearly salvaging nobody) and the extent to which their minds are braver than their chemistry. I don't know why I received George Hitchcock's poems now[9] (published, 1967, in a limited-edition *Vogue*-sized format, a boon to the eyes, I must say) and, turning to the wrong poems first, I was prepared to dismiss his effusions as those of just another anabaptist corrupted by Dali: no mode more dead than that of portentous surrealism, in which anarchy is met with anarchy. But he *is* a poet, as he demonstrates in "Republic of Mexico" and "Insomnia," where events, places and conceits cohere. His present problem, to employ a Chinese expression I have just learned: he draws a snake, then puts feet on it. . . . May Swenson[10] is so competent an animator at her best (if fatally enamored with the pathetic fallacy) that I fail to see why she needs the self-advertising and self-congratulating feature of poems that look like what they're doing. (The mind boggles when imagining "Ode to a Skylark" printed that way!) To refute her tiresome doctrine of the "iconograph" in this context, you have only to read these poems to the blind. They neither know nor care how the verse is disposed on the page. . . . Mark Strand[11] is a facile poet, hanging himself in his own closet; half fascinated by the spectacle, he is unable to call for someone to come and cut him down. "I have a key/ so I open the door and walk in/ It is dark and I walk in/ It is darker and I walk in" . . . "Flowers bloom/ Flowers die/ More is less/ I long for more." The title of this volume is in the Comparative mood. I shall find Strand very difficult to read if he advances to the Superlative, although he is very readable. At the center of the poet's work is a sexual trauma; it blackens everything he touches. In his less nauseated moments, no one can fault him. "The Stone" has authentic wit. "The Prediction" and "The Dress" are sensuous and moonstruck, echoing, rather well, that sexton of another age falling in on itself, John Webster.

Likewise, many poems by John N. Morris[12] are equivalents of Tom Lehrer's observation: "It's a sobering thought that when Mozart was my age he had been dead for five years." But Morris has acquired a lucent stoicism, as yet unavailable to Strand. These are poems of a man intent on climbing out of himself; when he emerges he may be among the most rewarding poets of his country. Morris sings a clear, kempt epigram; he is skilled in the use of rhyme and of unrhymed couplets for the simple declarative self-accusation. He has

[9] THE DOLPHIN WITH THE REVOLVER IN ITS TEETH, by *George Hitchcock*. Unicorn Press. $3.00.

[10] ICONOGRAPHS, by *May Swenson*. Charles Scribner's. $4.95.

[11] DARKER, by *Mark Strand*. Atheneum. $2.95.

[12] GREEN BUSINESS, by *John N. Morris*. Atheneum. $3.95.

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learned much from the Orient; his richest poems ("The Sleeping Cat," "Between Two Bells," "Arthurian Episode") invoke either Japan, itself, or an action which has the indelible and suggestive economy of a Japanese woodcut. To the *hokku* tradition he adds a pinch of salt, as in "Shh! The Professor is Sleeping":

> He is a man who thinks
> He sits in a tiny corner of the rain.
>
> He is what he is not thinking of.
> He is a large part of Japan.
>
> He is closed, like a small business.
> An illustration of the snow.

With some finality, Morris can also be scathing, as in "Fatness," nostalgic as in "Cockayne," Cassandra chastened by Auden (his grief is not Greek) as in "The Food and the Pay": "Outside the evidence/ Is gathering;/ We are full of theories but/ The satisfactions will not arrive in time."

American publishers baffle me. Among the books I have here, one has a phonograph record inserted in the cover; on the jacket of another the poet is photographed standing in a garbage can; heraldic type-face and chintzy end-papers memorialize a third-rate poet; while Ivan Lalic is published in a fragile binding which will speedily unbind if I reread him too often. And R. G. Vliet's twenty-one poems[13] are guaranteed oblivion by the modesty of their housing and their hideously distracting illustrations. Yet most of these poems are equal to those of anyone writing in America who takes his land more seriously than his ego. Vliet can manage a charged, compounded line in which he snares what other poets rumor or in fact don't see:

> THE CRICKETS IN THEIR ANTIQUE REAL WORLD
> shrill Ethiops of the grassblade-cry,
> and dustdrenched beetles clicking, and rasp
> of fans where tobacco-rich grasshoppers fly
> (though caterpillars climb by furry hunches
> into silence to the ravel day). . . .

or something like this, more open, that tolls like a bell and, even so, loses much of its value by isolation: it's an envoi, compressing what has gone before, a threnody on the death of a girl ("A Photograph"):

> Doves in season fall.
> Helped by ringtails, black
> persimmons fall; the call
> of hounds drop ringtails:

[13] THE MAN WITH THE BLACK MOUTH, by *R. G. Vliet*. Kayak Books. $1.50.

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October when red laurel
beans, acorns of liveoak
fall. And the world is real.

Vliet knows where his sources lie and that they don't yield poetry ready-made for the will that demands it. "Poetry (if it must come)/ must come never kept,/ but unkempt and dragging weed/ up from the seas, must be/ bulbous-eyed from old/ astonishments: a crank/ species meant not actually/ to be seen. . . ." He's no rustic, however; craft fashions his "crank species," the craft of a hunter who sees everything that relates to the quarry he's sighting (the light, the trajectory, the shape of thickets into which the quarry might flee) and, for the moment of the poem, sees nothing else. "After the Lone Ranger Died," a piece of spoofing, is no less earth-born than his other poems. His tribute to Emily Dickinson, beginning, "Who that life was/ is clear," is an evocation in eighteen short lines she might have written herself. Who that Vliet is should be clear.

Since the tradition of light verse is hallowed by centuries, I need not wriggle when I say that John Malcolm Brinnin, Reed Whittemore and the Englishman, John Holloway, are masters of light verse—and this is not to say they are confined by it. J. M. B.[14] has poise like some people have mice. He is a man of the world, which I say not as a WASP but as one who believes that things exist, even while I am appalled by their transience. Brinnin never labors to *become* the object of his poem; he lives in his own skin; a tactful consciousness informs his residence permits. At home or abroad he is never submerged by his compassion or by his discomforts. At every page I wanted to shout, "Listen to this!" But there was nobody there. Had there been, how might I have persuaded a European that this (on the maiden flight of a dirigible) is *rich*?

Jesus, said Uncle Lester, *what a beaut!*
Chomping on Juicy Fruit, we eyed her close
As, nuzzling upward from her stake, she rose
In strict submission to the absolute.
We hit the highway sixty on the nose
And jettisoned our chicken bones en route.

—or "My Father, My Son," a minor masterpiece which, in eight short reels, as it were, records an aspect of America as graphically as *The Great Gatsby* or *Bonnie and Clyde*? Every day, since receiving this volume, I have re-read the following passage—

Set down in our raw suburb
Mother wept,
her old life now a province in a mist
where military bands,

[14] SKIN DIVING IN THE VIRGINS AND OTHER POEMS, by *John Malcolm Brinnin*. Delacorte Press. $4.50.

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caged in an iron wedding cake,
played Humperdinck & Grieg
to the King's swans;
& years of calling cards,
laid in a silver dish,
tallied the last turns in the vestibule
of waltzing osprey & high-stepping fox. . . .

marvelling, how does he Leica so much loving history into eight lines? And he's that good anywhere: watching a gull break a clam, being bored in an Italian hill town, preparing to fly jet, London to New York—"The same March sun that polishes St. Paul's/ brightens the arches of my rack of toast. . . ."—and translating the poems of Jorge Carrera Andrade (these are splendid). The Very Nice American.

And Reed Whittemore is another.[15] He has been a favorite of mine since he edited *Furioso,* copies of which I hope I still have in a trunk somewhere, if I still have a trunk somewhere. Whittemore's is the art of deflation, not hostile, not quite sad—his maledictions forbid mourning—but certain. I'd like to quote his "Fall of the House of Usher," *hilarious,* but "The Sad Committee Shaggy" is shorter.

In good ole day ze king need no committee
Was nize.
Him says, them does; him sells, them buys.
Good system.
But then come big push make a king one of guys.
So king buy chairs, say me no king me chairman
So knocked off paradize.

Like most princely poets today, he has a wry taste for the re-appearance of history, inexorable and absurd (see "Jamestown," "The Parable of the Past" and "Thinking of Tents"). With "The Winter of our Discontent" and "The Silent Teacher in the Disappearing Classroom," etc., he has spoken the last word on the Student Revolution. (I wish it were so.) Take away the twentieth century *crise de nerf* and Whittemore would be Tsu No Chan, lamenting with smile sagacious the days of golden sherbet and the Tartar horde. And he has left me with a line I wish I had read when writing at length about Ingmar Bergman: ". . . poets decked out in gloom/ Who look for the good and the true in the cold/ and the bare. . . ."

As Englishman and poet, John Holloway[16] is astonishing: one of those *putti* in a Renaissance fresco, cheeks puffed out, eyes twinkling, resolved on *stirring up* the weather. Londoner and public-school man, he nonetheless reminds one of Dylan Thomas—the baroque insurgence, packed line, energetic verb, the up-off-and-away of soar-

[15] FIFTY POEMS FIFTY, by *Reed Whittemore.* University of Minnesota. $4.75.
[16] NEW POEMS, by *John Holloway.* Charles Scribner's. $4.50.

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ing hyphenates: "The year burns/ Earth-arson, tree-arson, as/ The wind quickens their fire shroud/ Into sail and red shrivel." Like Thomas, he often illustrates the sublime by the conspicuous ("The sky going brown as a bun") and he has a fantastic inner ear for conversations that never took place ("Old Short Word"). Unlike Thomas, the obscenity of death is not on his beat: one look but he doesn't linger. He reeks of *Henry IV,* the King James Version, Perpendicular Gothic, Blake, Constable, dogwood blossoms, apples and the rituals of lost villages: a bird-song view of England. With his "Rak" poems he is creating a mythology and into "Big Games" he has crowded, gleefully, the savage story of commerce. "Drinks at the Weathercock Inn" is a manual of song, each item so blithe and feather-light as to waft away if you separate, for quotation, one marvellous voice from the choir. Two stanzas of "Weathercock Aria" will epitomize his sonority, his levity, his Glorias for the Gone and his twenty-four eyes:

> Into the wind, turning my nose of brass
> Northward, I sigh in the airy tide and see
> The twin towers of Dereham where Cowper died,
> And Swaffham of the Great Fire. Beyond, towers
> Of iron are fishing for oil in the sea; beyond,
> Ice-islands and the Short Polar Hop,
> And the sea red with whales . . .
>
> Into the wind, turning my nose of gold
> Eastward, I swish in the airy current, and behold
> Bury St. Edmund's ruined monastery
> Acre upon acre, and beyond the sea of green
> And the Green Children of Woolpit, the dead port
> Of Blytheburgh, its empty church—"fire after fire"—
> "Shut the door," the sexton says, "or the birds
> Get in and fly around till they die of thirst."

And there's a wonderful poem about a smart dog-fox who knows "three-sided rivers that bring tears to hounds'/ Landseer eyes. He can make it rain." But I have four more poets to shuffle, encapsulate and abandon all too curtly.

Someone is always rediscovering Thomas Hardy *as a poet.* I suspect John Montague[17] will be rediscovered in the same way. He doesn't raise his voice to summon a contemporary audience. Nobly, he tells tales, explores a place-and-a-life with extraordinary simplicity (not really) without trying to jolt his reader into a sentiment more vivid than reverence. Before you know it, his poem is over; he has put the world in your lap, a small montage of pain or waste, "The sober structure of a land where/ Decay retains its ritual," or another kind of land where cattle "between shelving ditches of whitethorn . . . sway their burdensome/ Bodies, tempted at each turn/ By hollows of sweet grass. . . ." In "The True Song" he sings himself a warning

[17] A CHOSEN LIGHT, by *John Montague.* Swallow Press. $5.00.

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of the temptations that assail the poet: to "descend into beauty," to become "a detached god" or to be overwhelmed by "the body brought in from the street." An open-air man, a loving man—"There is no hawk among my friends," he writes (apostrophizing Roethke)—Montague makes songs from half-door cottages, hillside byres and forges, from self-division and the divorce of true minds, from the short terrible life of an Irish "whure." To say that he writes of Ireland, Brooklyn and France is only to say that most of his poems take *place*; yet something other than landscape will imprint his verse in your memory. Here is a something other (from "The Trout").

> As the curve of my hands
> Swung under his body
> He surged, with visible pleasure,
> I was so preternaturally close
> I could count every stipple
> But still cast no shadow, until
>
> The two palms crossed in a cage
> Under the lightly pulsing gills.
> Then (entering my own enlarged
> Shape, which rode on the water)
> I gripped. To this day I can
> Taste his terror on my hands.

I have been reading W. S. Merwin for years and always found him priestly and inscrutable, a poet's poet, perhaps. Separately taken. his poems have a wintry appeal, like the beautiful and melodious "Now It Is Clear To Me" in his latest collection,[18] of which this is the opening stanza:

> Now it is clear to me that no leaves are mine
> no roots are mine
> that wherever I go I will be a spine of smoke in the forest
> and the forest will know it
> we will both know it

Yet I confess that if I read many of his poems at a sitting I am wearied by the dying cadences, by the inexhaustibly refined authority with which the poet celebrates ineptitude, fear, snow and silence. In *The Miner's Pale Children* he contrives to express the same darkling vision with what can only be named prose poems, since they are not "stories," although there is no reason for denying many of them that title in the service of our not very useful definitions. Such vignettes depend wholly on allusiveness: the writer establishes a setting, frames an incident or evokes a characterization which is then

[18] THE CARRIER OF LADDERS, by *W. S. Merwin*. Atheneum. $3.95. THE MINER'S PALE CHILDREN, by *W. S. Merwin*. Atheneum. $6.50.

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to be erased, leaving its correlative—the reality—to be imagined by the reader. The object is to call up chills from the vasty deep. Beckett sometimes triumphs here, owing to his devilish linguistic resources; Auden's "Letter to a Wound" had an unerring point of departure, even if we disagree on where it was; Henri Michaux, the master, is a fabulist with a rational grasp of incongruity. To my mind, few of Merwin's come off; his irony is too often labored, the political jokes are not very searching. While his language is immaculate and his world is peopled, seldom does he convince me that something is happening *to* someone! Appropriately, the first sentence in the book reads, "Once when I looked at myself there was nothing." Merwin ransacks a universe of objects to demonstrate the impossibility of apprehending them. Here and there are achievements. "The Diver's Vision" is an evocation that stays, frozen, in the mind like a good poem. So is "The Clover." "The Death-defying Tortonis" is masterful, precisely because its details (concerning a high-wire-cycling family) are narrated with such meticulousness that they appear to constitute the subject.

Insisting that comparisons are not invidious, I suggest that James Merrill does more often and with tensions more subtle what Merwin strives to do. In this slim reissued volume[19] are many subjects nearly parallel with those of Merwin: icebergs, museums, mirrors, barren landscapes. They do not return to plague the inventor; the presences in them are, so to speak, independent of the poet and tangible, which is not to say they aren't infinitely oblique, even opaque. The Very Late James inevitably comes to mind: not his prolixity but his processional images, the more bizarre for being concrete; their concreteness is the stuff of metaphor. Merrill is nearly impossible to quote briefly; his terse poems don't best convey his music or his subtle coloring, the longer poems are too long ("The Octopus," "The Dunes" and "Mirror" are superlative). But one section of "Saint," cruelly excised, may ratify my praise.

> . . . . The women
> Limp toward the chapel named for him.
> Their gums water. They mumble hocus-pocus
> Before the painted wood baroque
> Sebastian. Already his left foot is missing.
> The strong white ankle, kiss by kiss
> Borne past the dyed breaths and the human acids,
> Celebrates elsewhere its mass—
> While the saint, trammeled not at all by worm-drilled
> drapery
> In his ambition to escape
> No least causes, studies the whole procedure
> Exuberantly. . . .

[19] THE COUNTRY OF A THOUSAND YEARS OF PEACE, by *James Merrill*. Atheneum. $2.95.

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The contrasts of diction in this passage are the emblems of a fine art. Among the subtle ones, Merrill is a Druid.

So is Jean Follain,[20] in another language. I agree with the publisher that this poet has been "incomprehensibly neglected." I thought so when first reading a handful of his poems in translations by Bernard Waldrup. W. S. Merwin has now translated sixty-two of Follain's spellbound lyrics. *Transparence of the World,* originally the title of a single volume, is perfectly keyed for this selection of poems, from 1933 to 1967. Follain sees always something else, indefinable, through what he is nominally seeing; his poems have, therefore, a curious omnipresence of the past (the poet's childhood), the present and the future; but the future so visioned is seen from the past by the poet recalling, in the present. The effect is extraordinary and disquieting, as if life, in all its object-ness, shown to us by an Intimist painter, were totally phantasmal, vanishing before we could divine the mystery of the juxtapositions he had created: as if Proust, evoking the madeleine, had had no time further to associate it by persistent recollection but had instead accepted any unrelated image which arrived and had made a laconic poem of the incongruity. No "I" orders these insights. The poems are objective and personal at once and more than a little frightening. A ferret gorges on a rabbit, dies unaroused by peasants firing the heather, while little girls pass "with hearts as clearly veined as lilac leaves." Through a schoolroom window one glimpses a map of Asia on which Siberia is as warm as India and insects crawl from the Indus to the Amur (written and translated as *Amour*!); women at nightfall sing as they sew livery for servants; a passer-by, hearing them in the "birdless street . . . goes off sad and alone/ to phantom dinners."

By a fine coincidence I have written this review in October. Most of the poets comprised have written what might be called, after one of Follain's mellowed, if haunted verses, "October Thoughts":

> How one loves
> this great wine
> that one drinks all alone
> when the evening illumines its coppered hills
> not a hunter now
> stalks the lowland game
> the sisters of our friends
> seem more beautiful
> at the same time there is a threat of war
> an insect pauses
> then goes on.

20 TRANSPARENCE OF THE WORLD, by *Jean Follain,* trans. by *W. S. Merwin.* Atheneum. $6.95.

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WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Frost Departmentalized

ALMOST ANYONE YOU RUN INTO these days, fresh from reading the second volume of Lawrance Thompson's biography, or perhaps someone's review of it, will ask what you think of Frost now, now that he has been painstakingly exposed as the monster some always knew, or hoped, he really was.[1] If the newly-enlightened person is forgiving, he may say that it just goes to show how we're all human, nobody's perfect—as some curious legend had it Frost was. Or he may compliment himself that, though no poet, at least he takes better care of his family than did the bard from New Hampshire or Vermont. The line that best sums up this sense of Frost exposed, either wittingly or unwittingly through Thompson's book, is found in Helen Vendler's acute and influential review in the *New York Times Book Review*: noting that Thompson's volume is subtitled "The Years of Triumph" Mrs. Vendler remarked "If this be triumph, what is disaster?" And she went on forcefully to argue that Thompson is capable of "criminal blandness" in his attempts to (in his own words) "Offer a balanced delineation that mingles sympathy with critical detachment," that in fact he sides with Frost whenever it suits him, and that through seven hundred pages of what she terms "doughy prose" it becomes abundantly clear Frost was a much worse character than Thompson can possibly admit. I found the prose often as doughy as does Mrs. Vendler, but exactly for that reason I am unwilling to join her in assuming that we can wade through the dough and come upon Frost plain, that is, monstrous.

To begin with, anyone familiar with the *Selected Letters* which Mr. Thompson edited and published six years ago will find little to shock him in the new biographical volume. Many of those letters are quoted at length in this volume, but now often as illustrative substantiation for the narrative Thompson is weaving; for example, in the *Letters* volume Thompson quoted the following paragraph from a letter to Lincoln MacVeagh (Frost's agent at Henry Holt) about Carl Sandburg's appearance at the University of Michigan, where Frost was spending a year as resident artist:

> We've been having a dose of Carl Sandburg. He's another person I find it hard to do justice to. He was possibly [three] hours in town and he spent one of those washing his white hair and toughening his expression for his public performance. His mandolin pleased some people, his poetry a very few and his infantile talk none. His affectations have almost buried him out of sight. He is probably the most

[1] ROBERT FROST: The Years of Triumph 1915-1938, by *Lawrance Thompson*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. $15.00.

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> artificial and studied ruffian the world has had. Lesley says his two long poems in The New Republic and The Dial are as ridiculous as his carriage and articulation. He has developed rapidly since I saw him two years ago. I heard someone say he was the kind of writer who had everything to gain and nothing to lose by being translated into another language.

Now, in the narrative describing the visits of various poets Frost brought to Michigan, Thompson tells us that Frost disliked Sandburg, that Sandburg had praised free verse in the lecture, then accompanied himself on the guitar and sung American folksongs including one with the lines "Oh my name it is Sam Hall, and I hate you one and all, damn your eyes." And Thompson introduces Frost's letter by remarking coyly: "Most of the hating was done by Robert Frost that afternoon in Hill Auditorium, and Sandburg had scarcely left town when Frost reacted bitterly in a letter to MacVeagh," after which we get the paragraph quoted above. Now to me the remarks about Sandburg seem brilliantly right: Frost has found exactly the words that do full justice to "the most artificial and studied ruffian the world has had." The picture of Sandburg spending one hour out of his brief stay "washing his white hair and toughening his expression" is true only in the sense that poems are true which can't be gainsayed or dislodged once the right words have been found to write them in. But Thompson, preoccupied with making his narrative move along in a lively manner, decides to raise a few eyebrows by making the play on "hate" and so moves from the Sandburg song to what we then are supposed to accept as Frost's Real Feelings: hate and a "bitter reaction" to MacVeagh.

I suppose if a biographer chooses to see only hate and bitterness in this letter, and to ignore the studied wit with which contempt is molded into a fine comic creation, then at least we could delight in the letter and provide our own reading of it.[2] But not content to leave things at that, Thompson has performed an act of supererogation by providing, as he loves to, a special index with sixty-three topical subheads which will help to "illuminate the complicated and contradictory responses of Frost as man and as artist. To expedite reference and cross-reference, the topical subheads are grouped here with page numbers." How thoroughly departmental! If, in Thompson's word, you "browse" your way through these sixty-three topical subheads you will eventually come to "Vindictiveness," and if undeterred you

[2] As in the case of the following sentences from a letter to Untermeyer after Amy Lowell's death; Thompson gives us the ins and outs of Frost's "malice" towards her, then quotes without comment this epitaph: "I did go before the assembled college to say in effect that really no one minded her outrageousness because it never thrust home: in life she didn't know where the feelings were to hurt them, any more than in poetry she knew where they were to touch them. I refused to weaken abjectly." Is "malice" the right word for this—or something more complicated?

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follow up that subhead you will encounter a list, in alphabetical order, of "RF's vindictive gestures against" people all the way from "Arnold, Matthew" (a poor dead literary figure) through "King, Stanley" (a poor dead president of Amherst College) and on through most contemporary poets and for good measure Frost's wife, son and sister. The assumption is that at one point or another in his life Frost was vindictive toward Matthew Arnold, Stanley King, his wife, Carl Sandburg, Amy Lowell and the rest. Thompson seems to have no doubts that he has found the perfectly accurate word to label, in each case, what really went on.

Since the reader is invited to use this special index, I complied by compiling a list of the following "topical sub-heads" as an indication of the traits Thompson thinks worth emphasizing in Frost's character. My selected list, in alphabetical order runs: "Anti-intellectual" "Baffler-teaser-deceiver" "Brute" "Charlatan" "Cowardice" "Depression, Moods of" "Enemies" "Fear" "Gossip" "Hate" "Insanity" "Jealousy" "Misunderstanding" "Murderer" "Pretender" "Puritan" "Rage" "Retaliations, Poetic" "Revenge" "Self-Centeredness" "Spoiled Child" and finally "Vindictive." On the other side of the ledger I note "Friendship," but no headings under the following titles which I have constructed for myself: "Intellectual" "Bravery" "Exhilaration, Moods of" "Hope" "Love" "Sanity" "Understanding" "Loyalty." I conclude that Thompson feels these qualities are not worthy of indexing in Frost; yet Ridgeley Torrence is quoted as saying in 1919 "He is a man, a noble character in addition to being a noble poet" and two years later the reporter from the Boston Traveler remarked upon the "remarkable face of the man . . . strong features that radiate peace, contentment, and the perfectly balanced solidarity of the inner man." Why not index entries on "nobility" or "strength"? Or were Torrence and the reporter simply deceived?

Yet Thompson has found room to include the eye-catching category of "Murderer" and presuming that by this point in the book we are still naive enough to question the appropriateness of that term as naming an important aspect of Frost's character we could look it up in the index and find under it three entries, the first of which directs us to a statement Frost made in a letter to Witter Bynner begging off writing a preface to Bynner's poetry. Frost asks for forgiveness then adds "even as I hope to be forgiven a murder I did once" which remark Thompson believes refers to guilty feelings over the death of his first child. The second entry refers us to Lesley Frost's grief-stricken accusation, after her mother's death, that Frost was somehow responsible. The third, and it would seem most significant entry, is this: "RF recalls five people he wanted to murder, 439-440." Turning back to page 439 we come upon the poem "A Roadside Stand" whose reference to "greedy good-doers" pretty clearly has the New Deal in mind and which ends with Frost musing about how these poor people

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who run this pathetic stand might be relieved to be put "at one stroke out of their pain," after which he wonders how *he* would like it if they offered to do that to him. Not very memorable verse, and with its sentiment worn pretty simply on its sleeve. But Thompson moves in with the heavy artillery:

> Murder, and even the desire to murder for justice rather than for mercy, never stayed out of Frost's consciousness too long. He had thought of entitling this poem, sarcastically, "Euthanasia," but part of what bothered him as literary strategy was his recent tendency to let his new poems reflect all too many of his murderous thoughts.

We are then conducted through a series of footnoted memories (introduced with the phrase "He could remember . . .") of various people whom at one time or other Frost would like to have done away with: "In England, there came a day when he would have taken pleasure in murdering Ezra Pound. Not long after he returned to the United States, he had thought of killing his old enemy, Ellery Sedgwick, editor of the Atlantic Monthly." And he had once used "razor words in public to achieve a murderous revenge" on his old Pinkerton school-boss. For Thompson there is no difference between word and thing: if you say you'd like to cut Pound's throat then you are entertaining thoughts of murdering him. If you are filled with rage against Ellery Sedgwick's lordly treatment of you, then you "had thought of killing him," as if Frost was ready to stomp into the Atlantic Monthly office and gun Sedgwick down, frock coat and all. Or that using "razor words" to achieve "murderous revenge" is really about the same thing as cutting someone's jugular.

Thompson's extraordinary literal-mindedness is perhaps most depressingly evident in what was already a full-blown campaign in his edition of the letters and first volume of biography, namely the proving that Frost was a man of "deep religious faith." From the thousands of words in text and notes devoted to this matter I will point briefly to one sequence in order to suggest how, if you are Thompson, you go about such proof. It is really very simple: take the assertion "Some may know what they seek in school or church" (from "A Star in a Stone-boat") which looks subversive in regard to matters of religion and handle it this way: "He continued to enjoy casting himself in the role of rebel and skeptic, even though his actual position in matters of belief was far more conservative and orthodox than he permitted his public to guess." At this point a footnote teases you to seek out verification for Thompson's knowledge of Frost's "actual position" in these matters. But, alas, Footnote 21 of Chapter 17 says only "For a discussion of this ambivalent and Uriel-like posture, see note 40 of Chapter 6." Figuring this next one will really provide the goods, and so following along patiently, we eventually come to a discussion of Frost's relation to Emerson's poem "Uriel":

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a complicated matter, and perhaps more complicated than the text's bold phrase about his "actual position" might lead us to suspect. You can do anything with words though: just extract a subversive-looking utterance from the poem, call it "apparent skepticism" and move on to the next poem. If the poem is the playful "An Empty Threat," quote the end of it then add "In spite of all his teasings, aimed at the doubts (or even the beliefs) of those whose opinions differed from his, Frost was essentially concerned with using his poetry for the purpose of affirming his own religious belief." It is of course the biographer's privilege to strike through the mask and move about confidently in the realm of essence where all apparent skepticism is really deep religious faith. But it reminds me of an incident on "Meet the Press" some years ago when the indefatigable Lawrence Spivack was pressing Frost to say that on the whole his life had been a happy one, while Frost kept claiming it all depended on how he felt when he got up in the morning. Time ran out before Spivack got the answer he wanted; time doesn't of course run out on Mr. Thompson.

One poem Thompson fails to mention, in his discussion of Frost's deep religious faith, was the following unpublished verse which I quote from the memory of having heard Frost satisfiedly recite it:

> Mary had a little lamb,
> His name was Jesus Christ;
> God, not Joseph, was the ram
> But Joseph took it nice.

Would one want to say that this poem was *really* a self-defensive mask for Frost's richly deep feelings about Christ and his parents? Or would it be less tendentious, more playful perhaps, to say that the poem was a momentary score for a poet who cared more about the delights of performance than he cared about anything else? On the occasion of one public reading he was asked by a true-hearted soul from the audience whether he, Frost, was ever confused. Do you know a game called *Confusion,* Frost asked? No, the questioner did not. Let's play it, said Frost: first I'll ask you, are you confused? Yes, stoutly answered the sincere questioner. Now you ask me, invited Frost. Are *you* confused Mr. Frost? *No*—you lose, answered Frost, and with that the game was over. What can you do with that sort of ruthless play? Thompson's response is to understand, to understand, and once more to understand: as a biographer he never admits to confusion of any sort, and this perhaps accounts for the oppressive manner in which he sits on his subject with labels and schemes. And indices.

But can we brush all these matters aside, push through "the facts" as Thompson painstakingly sets them down and penetrate to the Real Frost? One of the seemingly most telling points in Mrs. Vendler's review is made when she quotes as an illustration of Thomp-

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son's "criminal blandness" the following sentence about Frost's son Carol: "There had never been any sustained affection between him and his father, and on many occasions each had antagonized the other in ways which had built up lasting enmities." Mrs. Vendler says:

> Surely this is to apportion blame equally: Thompson forgets that Carol was a baby and Frost a man when it all started. What is a father who has no "sustained affection" for his son but a monster? A terrifying lack in Frost is made to sound like a peccadillo.

But Mrs. Vendler too easily ignores the fact that "sustained affection" is Thompson's phrase, and she wrongly makes use of what she has already characterized as "doughy prose" to leap to a rhetorical question about Frost as monster. What does she know that enables her to be clear about this "terrifying lack" in Frost? How many fathers, if put on the spot, could be trusted to judge whether they really did or did not truly have "sustained affection" for their sons? Does the fact that Carol eventually killed himself constitute unfailing proof that his father was derelict in affection? From the biography it looks to me that Frost was a man who paid enormous attention to his children, no doubt both marvelous and crippling as such attention often turns out to be. My own inclination is to judge not lest I be judged.

Furthermore I would insist, contra Mrs. Vendler, that the life recounted in these pages is not "a sad life," at least no more so than any poet's whose experience is all our experience intensified: "We poets in our youth begin in gladness;/But thereof come in the end despondency and madness." And that all the spite or pettiness or malice of character which this biographer details with such solemn and judgmental care, fall away not only when we read the poems from those "Years of Triumph" (triumphs like "An Old Man's Winter Night" or "Putting in the Seed" or "The Hill Wife" or "To Earthward" or "West-Running Brook") but when we read a letter such as this one, written after Frost's daughter Marjorie had died tragically:

> . . . Well, the blow has fallen. The noblest of us all is dead and has taken our hearts out of the world with her. It was a terrible seven weeks' fight—too indelibly terrible on the imagination. No death in war could more than match it for suffering and heroic endurance. Why all this talk in favor of peace? Peace has her victories over poor mortals no less merciless than war. Marge always said she would rather die in a gutter than in a hospital. But it was in a hospital she was caught to die after more than a hundred serum injections and blood transfusions. We were torn afresh every day between the temptations of letting her go un-

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tortured or cruelly trying to save her. The only consolation we have is the memory of her greatness through all. Never out of delirium for the last four weeks her responses were of course incorrect. She got little or nothing of what we said to her. The only way I could reach her was by putting my hand backward and forward between us as in counting out and saying with over-emphasis *You*—and—*Me*. The last time I did that, the day before she died, she smiled faintly and answered "All the same," frowned slightly and made it "Always the same." . . . The classical theory was not born out in her case that a fine and innocent nature released by madness from the inhibitions of society will give way to all the indecencies. Everything she said, however quaint and awry, was of an almost straining loftiness. It was as if her ruling passion must have been to be wise and good, or it could not have been so strong in death. But curse all doctors who for a moment let down and neglect in childbirth the scientific precautions they have been taught in school. We thought to move heaven and earth—heaven with prayers and earth with money. We moved nothing. And here we are Cadmus and Harmonia not yet placed safely in changed forms.

One of the ways you felt in Frost's presence was elevated: he had the power momentarily to turn all our sad lives into something else. His own life becomes "sad," the "Years of Triumph" a hollow phrase, only when a biographer's single-minded explanations of that life are allowed to outweigh the voice which speaks out through poem or letter and leads us by a renewal of words to a renewal of our own possibilities for life. The Play's the thing, Play's the thing, Frost said in his preface to Robinson's last poem. Though the following sonnet from Robert Lowell's *Notebook* is about Frost at a point in his career beyond which the present book leaves off, it leaves things open in a way more biographers should aspire to:

> Robert Frost at midnight, the audience gone
> to vapor, the great act laid on the shelf in mothballs,
> his voice musical, raw and raw—he writes in the flyleaf:
> "Robert Lowell from Robert Frost, his friend in the art."
> "Sometimes I feel too full of myself," I say.
> And he, misunderstanding, "When I am low,
> I stray away. My son wasn't your kind. The night
> we told him Merrill Moore would come to treat him
> he said, 'I'll kill him first.' One of my daughters thought
> things,
> knew every male she met was out to make her;
> the way she dresses, she couldn't make a whorehouse."
> And I, "Sometimes I'm so happy I can't stand myself."
> And he, "When I am too full of joy, I think
> how little good my health did anyone near me."

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GUY DAVENPORT

Ezra Pound, the Poet?

An evening in Vienna between the wars one could have observed two men in a restaurant. Their language is French, their gestures bold, artistic, extravagant. They do not seem to belong to this century at all, for the one (he is Ezra Pound) looks like an Elizabethan poet who has borrowed a suit of clothes from Signore Marinetti; and the other (he is Jean Cocteau) looks as if he has kept his engagement by making his excuses to the young Swann, or to Baudelaire. His shirt cuffs are turned back over his jacket sleeves, and he is saying that they must hasten. They are to see something new in the *avant-garde,* a play of astounding originality. Pound in 1955 thought it was something by Schnitzler; it sounds more like Brecht.

Cocteau, tickets in hand, hailed a taxi, commanding it to take him and Pound to the theatre. Neither Pound nor Cocteau was fluent in German, so that when the taxi dropped them at a gaudy place indeed (lurid posters, a sidewalk barker) there was trouble over their tickets, shouts, and a tedious speech from an usher whose eyes grew rounder and rounder. Cocteau brushed all this aside, and he and Pound took their seats. The curtain rose. A magician in top hat and cape put a spangled lady in a box. Cocteau was ecstatic. The magician sawed the lady in half. Cocteau could scarcely contain himself. Pound in later years did not remember just how much of the vaudeville they saw before the management plucked them back into the lobby and was successful this time in showing them that their tickets were for a play on the other side of town.

This anecdote is not in Noel Stock's biography of Pound[1] (nor in Francis Steegmuller's recently published biography of Cocteau). It is not, admittedly, an anecdote that tells a great deal about either man. Pound liked to tell it, I think, because of the delicious ridiculousness of the situation. Here were the two great forward scouts lost in a bog.

Nor is the Pound who treasured this misadventure in Mr. Stock's biography. The unique flavor, the salt, the idiom of a man is practically always lost in any biography. Prof. Ellmann has shown us Joyce as a rapacious, dark-minded monster—a gloomy man who seems to have worried more than any man in Europe since Fourier. When we hear of the Joyce who had a landscape of Cork framed in cork on his wall, the Joyce who roared with laughter over passages he had just written for *Finnegans Wake,* we wonder if he could be the same man.

Biography, particularly the long scholarly biography, creates some strange effects. For one thing, a life lived at a pace of 365 days per year is unreeled before us in a matter of hours. The thicker the de-

[1] THE LIFE OF EZRA POUND, by *Noel Stock.* Pantheon Books. $10.00.

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tail, the greater the cinematic flickering. Picasso's biography is the simple fact that he has painted since age twelve. In between pictures there were poets, wives, visits to the bullring, the movies. It is obvious that Picasso's *life* is there on the canvasses; all else is lunch (there is photographic evidence that he eats), looking over the newspaper, and endorsing checks.

The life of any artist is more than apt to be invisible, or at least indescribable. The writer spends his time writing. Pound spent his life writing poems and letters, reading, and playing tennis. The career is on record, and this can be charted. One can quote from letters and poems. Mr. Stock has done this with great diligence. As the poetry changed from year to year, one can keep track of the progressions, noting stylistic innovations. Pound has left behind him a trail of paper from the cradle onward.

But—and here any biographer is up against the severest demands of his art—Pound was also a man of encounters and friendships. There was the day John Cournos (who?) introduced Pound to Henri Gaudier-Brzeska (pronounced?). What, at such points, is the biographer to do? Well, he can block in brief identifications, and get ahead with other encounters, hundreds and hundreds of them. Later scholars will write the books on Pound and Cournos (a story that includes Hilda Doolittle, a valiant attempt on Pound's part to teach the art of poetry to Cournos, Wyndham Lewis, Russia, and much else) and on Pound and Gaudier. Meanwhile, Pound's encounters work their way through the major artists of the world, until a Strawinsky here and a Picabia there begin to be so many names, thick as the generation of leaves.

The biographer, admittedly, is not a novelist; and perhaps he should be. The modern biographer sees himself as a cross between a reporter and an historian with sound, scientific rules. But when has the stuff of a life ever given up its color and tone to mere record-keeping? The Pound Mr. Stock draws for us is a voice, a highly energetic body, and a set of opinions on every subject that one might name, and on many that would have never been heard of except for Pound. He has, however, no eyes, yet Pound's sense of beauty must be put beside that of Botticelli and Hokusai. Nor has he any private life at all, but this omission is understandable, however ruinous to the biography. But the most curious effect of Mr. Stock's biography is its apparent assumption that Pound is a fairly ordinary man, an enthusiast who sprang hotheaded and half-wild from the University of Pennsylvania, insinuated himself into various grand moments of the century's art, evolved a mad theory of economics, wrote some passable lyrics, botched a long poem called *The Cantos,* got himself jailed for thirteen years, and is therefore eligible to have his life written.

Mr. Stock, an Australian, tells us that he became interested in Pound because of his political and economic views, which is sort of like a Theosophist reading Yeats. He went through a period of hero-worship,

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taking Pound to be a universal guru. He does not say so, but there must have been a period of disillusionment in which he saw Pound as a human being rather than as a combination Socrates, Aristotle, and the living Buddha. We can infer this decline in admiration from Mr. Stock's *Reading the Cantos* (1966), in which he approaches the long poem as "a work which nobody has yet shown any signs of understanding," and in which he demonstrates to his own satisfaction, at least, that *The Cantos* are unreadable, incoherent, and a great mess.

Borges, I believe, has written of the man who adored everything of Cervantes except *Don Quijote*, which he thought was a failure. Such a critic might even be highly desirable, given the current suspicion that critics who admire Pound are up to some kind of inside job, either as white-washers or unabashed fellow-travellers. Such an antiseptic approach would certainly be interesting, if it were possible. Mr. Stock, on the contrary, writes as if he cannot forgive Pound for being a great poet, and if not a great poet, then a genius of one ilk or another. At Harvard years ago it was decided that Pound was not himself a great poet, but was a great influence, a busy little tug that towed majestic ships out to sea and hailed them on their way.

Mr. Stock's record of how he got bogged down in *The Cantos* is instructive, and ought to be read by all students of poetry. The first stumbling block was in discovering that line after line of the long poem arose from the poet's experience, and that without a footnote appending the poet's experience the lines are as obscure as the Hittite calendar. He had never run into this kind of thing before, and was as upset as Queen Victoria when Tennyson pointed out to her with his walking stick the grave of Enoch Arden. Mr. Tennyson had *not* made it all up out of his marvellous head! How was one to know? What kind of trick is this business of poetry?

The Cantos are an epic; they contain history. They speak of kings who may be found elsewhere in encyclopedias and in books called the Classics. They contain hundreds of voices the owners of which are unidentified. They allude to places and events that are unfamiliar. All of this, Mr. Stock has decided, is in some sense an unfair claim on one's attention, especially if one has talked with the poet and learned how outlandish, how private, some of the allusions are.

A poem to its creator is one thing, to its readers quite another. The poet is looking at his work forever from behind it, the reader from in front. Every work of art is born in a nest of particular associations which must remain unknown thereafter. I have a feeling that if I were to tell Mr. Stock that Longfellow's "footprints in the sands of time" is an image derived from Hugh Miller's geological studies of the old red sandstone, he would feel a sharp disappointment that Longfellow did not make that clear, and complain that if one has to have such inside information, then the poem is a failure. Longfellow had no intention of preserving in his poem the geological fact that instigated it. Pound, and any other poet, is only too willing to provide the inter-

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esting inside detail that still hovers in his mind and which is not in the poem, destroying for the literalist his faith that he can read the poem on his own.

The other stumbling block that has discouraged Mr. Stock is the mode of *The Cantos,* the Cubist splintering of images, the Vorticist tilting of angles, the cinematic cuts and fades. Mr. Stock probably sees all this; his trouble is that he can't believe that a man who calls himself a poet has really done it that way. Poetry, Mr. Stock makes it clear throughout his biography of Pound, is one thing and one thing only. What an irony that this mind should undertake to write an account of the great inventive mind that showed that poetry can be written in far more than one way, the mind that studied Chinese, Greek, Provençal, Anglo-Saxon to search out every mode in which poetry might exist, the mind that saw in the archaic sculpture of Gaudier a new way of sculpting language and image?

So, regrettably, the biography before us is a tragedy in its writer's eyes, the ultimate failure of a promising poet to achieve the epic that was to have been his crowning work. This view is confusing, because we ask ourselves why Mr. Stock chose his subject in the first place. Is he trying to find out why Pound in 1946 (when Mr. Stock began to read him) was the most interesting writer he had ever heard of, and by 1960 was simply a crazy old man who had known a lot of important people? Is it a case of Sam Butler and Darwin all over again, the tangent furious that it is not parallel? None of these, I think, for by the time Mr. Stock wrote the biography he was already disenchanted with Pound, and was stuck with much invested capital that had somehow to be recovered and used. Pound's first biographer, Charles Norman, made no pretense of grasping Pound's poetry; he was simply fascinated by the figure Pound had cut in recent history. The second biography, Mr. Stock's, is something like a newsreel. The realities are there, but the soundtrack is not what it might have been.

The long, minutely detailed, academic biography is something very like a badly written novel. I suppose there would be raised eyebrows everywhere if a biographer were to study such a novel as, say, Mann's *Doktor Faustus,* and arrange the scenes in his biography as a novelist does, giving depth to characters and places. Surely some of the essence of Pound's life lies in his chosen homes—London, Paris, Rapallo, Venice. Surely a biographer ought somehow to summon the great moments of Pound's reading—the discovery of Yeats, of Arnaut, of Li Po. Pound's encounters with the arts might provide a biographer with one of his most intriguing themes. How, for instance, does one account for Pound's seeing in 1912 that Gaudier was a great sculptor when just two years before, Henry James, shown Picassos by Roger Fry, wept hot tears, and said, "Oh Roger! Roger! What has happened?" What preparation, what education, allowed Pound to see *Ulysses* for what it was immediately? Is this sensibility not a subject for the biographer?

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But a critic's first duty is to say what is in a book, and one must say that Mr. Stock has written as thorough an account of the movements, sayings, reputation, and circumambience of Ezra Pound as might be compiled at this time. If you are curious as to where Pound was year by year, nay, week by week, what he was writing, saying, and instigating, all of that is here, accurately and concisely. (A few errors have crept in, such as Edward Williams, the architect, for Edgar Williams.) What *isn't* in this biography is a sense of the grand dramatic moments of Pound's life, so that events zip by with neat efficiency, no matter what their import. Here, for instance, is a sentence on page 23: "Pound gave Hilda a ring to wear and they were unofficially engaged; soon, however, as the result of Professor Doolittle's opposition or some other cause it petered out." Hilda Doolittle's account of that sentence is a whole book, the unpublished *End to Torment* that has been passed around, Soviet-fashion, in Xerox copies for some ten years now. Is it sentimental to wish that Mr. Stock might at this point have summoned up for our interest (or chill of realization) the spectacle of the old Hilda Doolittle in her Swiss sanitarium corresponding with Pound in St. Elizabeth's Insane Asylum in Washington? May not biographies, like novels, be made of such epiphanies?

Mr. Stock mentions Pound's carpentry, one of his more engaging minor talents, but gives us no details of the marvelous designs Pound has evolved. I am typing this review on one of Pound's tables, a replica of one of his worktables. It is merely twelve 1 × 4's nailed together (in less than ten minutes), plus a top of plywood, and yet is so structurally sound that it is supporting 218 books (all on the far overhang), a Smith-Corona portable, a telephone, a potted sansevieria, some chrysanthemums in a wineglass, a telescope, flute, and portrait of Lenin. If I stand on it to hang another picture on the wall, it does not shake. Its design, like the best of Pound's poetry, is at once archaic and modern, and its form is evolved from its function.

One of Mr. Stock's tasks was to give an account of the intellectual history of the thought that took Pound to the stockade at Pisa and to the thirteen years in the madhouse in Washington. As it was the economic and political side of Pound's mind that first attracted Mr. Stock, this story is told with some thoroughness and insight, especially as Mr. Stock would seem to have suffered the same disillusionment as Pound himself. Even here, however, Mr. Stock sees nothing to salvage, nothing tragic in such an expense of energy.

Mr. Stock closes his biography with a eulogy that seems reticent ("that rare thing, a poet". . . "one of the few to whom is granted the gift of giving words to that which is beyond words"), displaying in that passive voice, as throughout this biography, that Pound was a man to whom things happened, the victim of genius, rather than the powerful inventor and renovator that he is.

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EDWARD W. SAID

A Standing Civil War

TWENTY YEARS AGO IT APPEARED to Roger Stéphane in his *Portrait de l'aventurier* that men like T. E. Lawrence, Andre Malraux, and Ernst von Salomon were of a type now neither possible nor effective in a world given over entirely to large collectivities. The solitary adventurer who incarnated and performed a private metaphysic of action had been succeeded by the political militant. In his Preface to Stéphane's book Sartre took issue with this view, refusing to believe, he said, in the dichotomy of the subordinate militant and the egoistical adventurer. True there could be no more Lawrences. But the contemporary militant had to summon the adventurer's virtues to the political task by connecting in his person what Sartre called "constituted" reason (a political goal formulated into discipline by a Party) with dynamic "constituting" reason (self-conscious, self-critical, even negative human activity). This, Sartre admitted, was a vicious circle; yet, he went on to conclude, even as one force seemingly cancelled out the other, *man* emerged, and this emergence makes as well as dignifies the *human* as no simple role can.

As a forecast of the revolutionary-adventurer like Che or Régis Debray this formula is interesting, at least as it murkily concedes that politics somehow is not all. There is an almost intransigent human residue left after the political role is filled, and the persistence of this mysterious, attractive quality still grips the imagination: this is true of Che and Debray. Nevertheless, with such men it is for the most part possible to reconcile the abiding charisma with a very definite political position taken and sacrificed for. So in some way an adventurer's spirit is required for a militant program of the sort they advocated. In the case of Lawrence, however, what has now become abundantly, even bewilderingly, clear is how great the disparity was between his extraordinary human means, whether exercised or not, and the ends they appeared to serve. With Lawrence the great question is, *what was he about;* since no definite aim seems to have been his from start to finish except perhaps the cultivation, and subsequent stalemating within himself, of a variety of contradictory gifts. The life-adventure was, to use Sartre's term, entirely "constituting," although without a constituted resolution. In a series of profound letters to Lionel Curtis in the spring of 1923 Lawrence proved, he said, that man was "a civil war"; the "end of this," he continued, "is that man, or mankind, being organic, a natural growth, is unteachable." Elsewhere Lawrence made the metaphor more personal: he himself was "a standing civil war"; and when in *Too True to be Good* Shaw called a character based on

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Lawrence Private Napoleon Alexander Trotsky Meek, the name alone was meant to convey Shaw's perception that his model contained forces in nearly desperate contradiction to one another. No wonder Lawrence took the strange view that "conscience in healthy men is a balanced sadism."

To say, in Irving Howe's vulgar description, that Lawrence had "a load on his mind" is to cheapen what makes him truly interesting. Lawrence's was a case of vital forces in conflict with themselves, not of a heavy philosophy weighing down a life. He is the best example I know of a special, but extreme form of life: the decentered one. Within himself Lawrence assembled tendencies that were highly developed, but he seemed unable to make one permanently dominant over and central to the others. This is one reason why E. M. Forster calls him a "joy for experts"—psychological, political, moral, biographical or literary—all trying to find what central thing explains him. In attempting to discover and fix him in some place, if only a conceptual one, the experts have missed, I think, what Forster so sensitively noted about Lawrence when Lawrence was at his most accessible, in the cottage he owned at Cloud's Hill. There Lawrence could "reject intimacy without impairing affection":

> I don't know whether I'm at all conveying in these remarks the atmosphere of the place—the happy casualness of it; and the feeling that no one particularly owned it. T. E. had the power of distributing the sense of the possession among all the friends who came there. When Thomas Hardy turned up, for instance, as he did one sunny afternoon, he seemed to come on a visit to us all, and not especially to see his host. Thomas Hardy and Mrs. Hardy came up the narrow stairway into the little brown room and there they were—the guests of us all. To think of Cloud's Hill as T. E.'s home is to get the wrong idea of it. It wasn't his home, it was rather his *pied-à-terre,* the place where his feet touched the earth for a moment, and found rest.

In each of the different activities he practiced Lawrence could devise a *pied-à-terre* for himself. One of the strongest impressions that his *Letters* give is how great his skill was at *seeming* to inhabit a field of endeavor. We see him writing as the professional Arabist, the revolutionary, the intelligence expert, the imperialist politician, the classical archeologist, the classical scholar, the military tactician and administrator, the social critic, the literary critic, the historian, and above all the writer haunted by his own writing—in each of these he found a *pied-à-terre,* and yet in no one did he completely rest and in no one did he completely take possession. R. P. Blackmur goes so far as to say that "Lawrence never produced a character, not even his own."

One way of dealing with the problem that I raised above (what was Lawrence about?) is to try to decide where Lawrence as a phenome-

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non *took place*. The latest such effort ingenuously gives away its mission in its title[1]—as if to suggest that there, in his *secret* lives, Lawrence can be pinned down—and after "revealing" in a styleless prose a series of often sensational secrets (most of them hinted at, and even exposed in other works on Lawrence), concludes pointlessly by quoting his epitaph. In many ways Knightley and Simpson (young though they are) are the culmination of almost fifty years of playing the Lawrence-hunting game. In their instance, however, the redoubtable research services of the *London Sunday Times* were placed at their disposal: no stone left unturned, documents here printed for the first time, interviews conducted in far away places. The journalistic clichés of self-congratulation, problem solving, and relentless sleuthing are legion. But as psychologists of Lawrence, or as literary critics, they don't—I must borrow Leavis's stern evaluation of C. P. Snow—begin to exist. Their politics, too, must be as baffling to them as they are to me.

What have they really contributed? Two things: one, a view of the precise extent to which Lawrence was enmeshed in a series of imperial dealings and double-dealings with the Near East, and two, the description of an elaborate ritual of flagellation devised by Lawrence shortly after he had extricated himself from the Arabian adventures. The first contribution amply documents the hypocrisy, arrogance and cynicism of the European powers when dealing with the "brown dominion": as a background to the daily catastrophe enacted in the Near East today the British and French connivances told by the authors filled me with helpless rage. What they simply report, they do well. As to the exact nature of and motive for Lawrence's role, we are left unsatisfied. At first an imperialist, trained by D. G. Hogarth at Oxford on war games and military scholarship, he was a member of the imperialist version of the Cambridge Apostles. As tactician and go-between during the Anglo-Arab alliance that began in 1916 his role was crucially important. (There is a dissenting Arab version, most persuasively set forth in Suleiman Mousa's *T. E. Lawrence: An Arab View*, Oxford, 1967, that depicts Lawrence as Richard Aldington did —as a liar and a subtle braggart.) The point to be made firmly is that Lawrence was useful in getting the Arabs to a position where they could be *nationally* identified and then pushed around by the Franco-British *entente*. By then, however, Lawrence had characteristically foresworn the whole business: that conclusion, or resolution, to his work he could not tolerate. In reality Lawrence had no politics to speak of: he did have an incredibly exact sense of places and persons, in particular Arabia and the Arabs. More than that, he hated the French irrationally, and apprehended vague, unsettling forces around him. But when it came to the meaning of his work with the Arabs—

[1] THE SECRET LIVES OF LAWRENCE OF ARABIA, by *Phillip Knightley* and *Colin Simpson*. McGraw-Hill. $8.95.

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after it was all over—he could only summarize imaginatively. He put it in this way in the suppressed opening chapter of *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom:*

> In these pages the history is not of the Arab movement, but of me in it. It is a narrative of daily life, mean happenings, little people. Here are no lessons for the world, no disclosures to shock peoples. It is filled with trivial things, partly that no one mistake for history the bones from which some day a man may make history, and partly for the pleasure it gave me to recall the fellowship of the revolt. We were fond together, because of the sweep of the open places, the taste of wide winds, the sunlight, and the hopes in which we worked. The morning freshness of the world-to-be intoxicated us. We were wrought up with ideas inexpressible and vaporous, but to be fought for. We lived many lives in those whirling campaigns, never sparing ourselves; yet when we achieved and the new world dawned, the old men came out again and took our victory to re-make in the likeness of the former world they knew. Youth could win, but had not learned to keep: and was pitiably weak against age. We stammered that we had worked for a new heaven and a new earth, and they thanked us kindly and made their peace.

After having been in the midst of the whole imbroglio Lawrence was contented with whatever arrangements Churchill (then Colonial Secretary) made. The Arabs were driven out of Damascus by the French, Iraq and Transjordan were created and endowed upon Feisal and Abdullah respectively, and the ambiguously promised Palestine held in mandate by the British. Nowhere do Knightley and Simpson imply, as they should have, that Lawrence's failure of impulse, his almost hysterical retreat from schemes he concocted (like the one involving the Arabs and the Zionists, who were to supply money at 6%) was rooted in his congenital desire to remain always the lonely exception to all plans and men and customs. Here is the pattern in two sentences from *The Seven Pillars:* "I had learned to eat much one time; then to go two, three, or four days without food; and after to over eat. I made it a rule to avoid rules in food; and by a course of exceptions accustomed myself to no custom at all." Nor can one account for this circuit of self-foiling ("I accustomed myself to no custom at all") as due simply to the exigencies of desert warfare. Lawrence wrote the following in a letter of 1923:

> I consume the day (and myself) brooding, and making phrases and reading and thinking again, galloping mentally down twenty divergent roads at once, as apart and alone as in Barton Street in my attic. I sleep less than ever, for the quietness of night imposes thinking on me: I eat breakfast only, and refuse every possible distraction and employment and exercise. When my mood gets too hot and I

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> find myself wandering beyond control I pull out my motor-bike and hurl it top-speed through these unfit roads for hour after hour. My nerves are jaded and gone near dead, so that nothing less than hours of voluntary danger will prick them into life: and the "life" they reach then is a melancholy joy at risking something worth exactly 2/9 a day.

The unceasing inner ferment of his later life had developed from his young man's habit of doing remarkable, unexplained things. He rode bicycles uphill and walked them downhill, he would not eat anything on certain days, he learned how to read a newspaper upside down, he knew more (and showed it) about certain subjects than anyone else. He could draw forth compliments of the highest sort from professionals (Liddell Hart compared Lawrence with Marlborough as a brilliant soldier, Lord Wavell said that no one knew more about military history than Lawrence, Churchill acknowledged Lawrence as a very great man, Shaw and E. M. Forster were enthusiastic admirers of his writing) without ever turning himself into a professional.

To some of his friends he admitted that after becoming so terribly famous as a Prince of Mecca a deeper disquiet took him over utterly. This is apparent during the course of *The Seven Pillars,* in which as narrator and prime mover, Lawrence becomes narrator and actor slowly being destroyed by a sense of consuming deceit. He describes, in the book's most notorious chapter, how after being captured by the Turks at Deraa he was forced to submit to torture and rape, as if in punishment for the game he was playing. Knightley and Simpson go over the incident meticulously: was Lawrence, as he admitted to Charlotte Shaw, really buggered? They cannot be sure, but there is no doubt that Lawrence acted later *as if* he had lost what he called his "bodily integrity." The weird arrangement he made with a young Scotsman, John Bruce, to have himself periodically beaten according to orders given by a mysterious Old Man (an invention) ran concurrently with the "mind-suicide" he devised for himself by enrolling in the ranks first of the RAF, then the Tank Corps, then finally the RAF again. Knightley and Simpson are scarcely equipped to do more than tell this story in gross narrative sequence, this story of inner ravagement. They construct a plausible scheme whereby Lawrence subordinated himself to various admired individuals during different periods of his life, but the scheme still does not explain his psychology. For his mode of experience was as much trial by ordeal as it was submission to authority; and overriding both was determined eccentricity. He seemed fascinated by irregulars like Roger Casement, and planned *The Seven Pillars* as a "titanic" book, i.e., big and thoroughly exceptional. He made three or four strong emotional attachments during his life, to a young Arab (probably the S. A. to whom *The Seven Pillars* was dedicated in a cryptic poem), to D. G. Hogarth, and then to Char-

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lotte Shaw (Mrs. G. B. S.), but all of them were of course incapable of development.

One fact about Lawrence has always to be dealt with: his illegitimacy. No critic has ever disputed that as a young boy Lawrence found out that his parents were unmarried, and all have gone on to assume that the discovery wounded him permanently. Knightley and Simpson hedge their ideas about this with some reservations, but in the main they concur. In an otherwise perceptive paper on Lawrence, the Boston psychiatrist John E. Mack (*The American Journal of Psychiatry,* 8 February, 1969) suggests that the "profound impact" of his illegitimacy on the young Lawrence was in the main detrimental. Mack does not go far enough, I think. It was the very essence of Lawrence's self to transform this primal weakness into the basis of his deliberate singularity. We can assume that he was shocked at the discovery, but what he did with the discovery—obviously a revelation to him of something *that weakened him psychically (not socially as Mack says)—was to* convert it into a strength. An illegitimate son is in everything but legal and religious status a real son: every bit of evidence that Mack gives portrays the relation between Lawrence and his mother as a very strong one. Lawrence felt her to be "rather wonderful: but very exciting." Yet he resented, and in fact prevented her invasion of his integrity. Two things emerge then: a sense of isolation and strength, and second, a gift for extracting from others (initially from his mother) the devotion he deserved *as if* he were a regular, that is a legitimate, object of devotion. The two are inter-connected, for isolation is enforced by illegitimacy, and strength that only lends itself provisionally to either a cause or a person, can develop independently of permanent ties. The tie especially to be avoided was the maternal one and all its analogues: that is, any tie that would make Lawrence appear as anything but self-born, self-originating. In relation to his family, to his country, to the Arabs, to most of his friends, this is exactly the way Lawrence stood: strong, alone, and only *as if* one of them.

It is very difficult to carry off that sort of attitude in one's work as a writer. The ties between an author and his writing are definite (he is the final *authority,* no matter what the fiction). Lawrence's complex relations to his writing ultimately centered around the extent to which he did well as an author, the extent to which he was able to translate "the everlasting effort to write" into the best prose. The fastidiousness of his care was astonishing, rivalling that of Flaubert or James; and the prose itself is nothing if not worked and re-worked, sometimes into a terrifying density. Even so he often masked his care in the as-if technique of his personal life. On August 23, 1922 he shrugged himself off to Edward Garnett:

> Don't call me an artist. I said I'd like to be, and that book *The Seven Pillars* is my effort in the manner of an artist: as my war was a decent imitation of soldiering, and my politics chimed well with

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> the notes of politicians. These are all good frauds, and I don't want you to decorate me, for art, over the book in which I explode my legend as man-of-war and statesman!

He was more candid ten years later in a letter to Ernest Altounyan:

> Writing has been my inmost self all my life, and I can never put my full strength into anything else. Yet the same force, I know, put into action upon material things would move them, make me famous and effective. The everlasting effort to write is like trying to fight a feather-bed. In letters there is no room for strength.

And at a late moment (Chapter 99) in *The Seven Pillars* he says the following:

> It was a hard task for me to straddle feeling and action. I had had one craving all my life—for the power of self-expression in some imaginative form—but had been too diffuse ever to acquire a technique. At last accident, with perverted humour, in casting me as a man of action had given me a place in the Arab revolt, a theme ready and epic to a direct eye and hand, thus offering me an outlet in literature, the technique-less art. Whereupon I became excited only over mechanism.

What attracted Lawrence to the act of writing was what paradoxically frustrated him, although he was able to recognize how perfectly writing itself, viewed either as tight order, as mechanism, or as having no conclusive force over things, was an analogy for his own personality. The author assumes a voice and a manner that will give him command over his matter only as long as he does not doubt his own authority. When in *The Seven Pillars* Lawrence begins to be primarily conscious of playing a part, of being just an agent, with the Arabs—from that moment he becomes an unwilling transcriber of events. The capture at Deraa exposes his masquerade, and he is punished for it. From then on the author is the victim of his writing, a project, like the Arab revolt, which must be completed despite his efforts to withdraw. Lawrence's failure as a sincere man is balanced by a fanatical sincerity in rendering his own hypocrisy. In short, a standing civil war.

Lawrence's two main works, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1922) and *The Mint* (1936), are stages in his consciousness of this process. In the first book he is the builder of a movement and the architect of a war: when Damascus is liberated the "house is completed." During the work, however, Lawrence discovers that what he is building is a monument to betrayed hopes (from the Arab viewpoint), and a structure of hypocrisy (his own). That he completes the work at all reveals to him how wedded he is to an effort that dooms him completely to surviving as a triumph of inauthenticity. "For him," André Malraux writes, "art insensibly supplanted action. The Arab epic became

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in his mind the medium for a grandiose expression of human emptiness."[2] In the next work, which corresponds to the last part of his life, Lawrence has given himself up entirely to a machine that mints replicas; his role is no longer that of author-initiator, but of author transformed into common coin. The two books together then portray the destiny of an exceptional individuality, committed simultaneously to its own subjection and to a unique record of that subjection.

The gradually filled out account of Lawrence's life that we get in books such as Knightley and Simpson's is not, I think, going to make the man's special psychology become more accessible. In the end Lawrence's mind took writing as its province, there to begin, to flourish for a while, and die. Or, as he once said, to represent "the truth behind Freud." For in writing, exceptionality—Lawrence's goal—can be maintained even as normal human ties and relations (even those between a man and himself) dissolve. It was Lawrence's human tragedy that his exceptionality formed itself into a circle of pitiless antitheses, barely held in check by the desire to articulate them in prose. Again Malraux:

> The subject of the book he believed he was writing had become the struggle of a being lashed without mercy by the scorn which he felt for certain appeals of his own nature, by a fatality acknowledged, with terrible humiliation, as a permanent failure of his will,—against the passionate resolution of this same being to kill his demon with great conquering strokes of lucidity. *I wrote my will across the sky in stars . . .*

Lawrence will not endure as guerilla fighter, political militant, or even psychological oddity. But as a writer for whom writing replaced character with a dynamic of ceaseless and self-nullifying activity, he will remain exemplary. The body was held in contempt ("I have wished myself to know that any deliberate exercise of display of the body is prostitution; our created shapes being only our accidents until by taking pleasure or pains in them we make them our fault"), the mind was rebellious in an originality that admitted no progenitor. His final province, "the processes of air," overcame even his personality, until he could *write* from isolation into a fellowship as intimate as it was distant:

> We race over in the first dawn to the College's translucent swimming pool, and dive into the elastic water which fits our bodies closely as a skin:—and we belong to that too. Everywhere a relationship: no loneliness any more. *(The Mint)*

[2] André Malraux, "Lawrence and the Demon of the Absolute," in THE HUDSON REVIEW, Vol. VIII, No. 4, Winter 1956.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Rumors of Mighty Victories

SOME GRATEFUL NEW YORKERS are convinced that, if New York City isn't yet uninhabitable, it's only because champions spring up in the nick of time to brave and scatter the spoilers. The latest champion is Ada Louise Huxtable, and the outlander hears rumors of mighty victories (though the evidence, as in most legends of civic heroism, turns slippery as soon as one tries to handle it: just what did she accomplish? and what would have happened if her voice hadn't been raised? and how much of the work of the world is done by exhortation?). At any rate it's certain that, during her seven years on the *Times,* she has become a folk-heroine of the urban intelligentsia: she won a 1970 Pulitzer Prize for "distinguished criticism"; Daniel J. Moynihan wrote the Preface to her book.[1] It's equally certain that, for hard evidence of Mrs. Huxtable's virtues and shortcomings, even the most conscientious reviewer is obliged to begin with her book.

Mrs. Huxtable has strong feelings, the most respectable of platforms, friends in high places; her vocabulary and her innocent notion of history derive resoundingly from the art magazines ("Its geometric severity and austerely smooth planes, the play of light on simplified, aggrandized classical forms used with bold and striking originality, made the break with tradition that opened the door to the modern revolution"); she names names; no doubt she is anxiously noticed by city planners everywhere; she seems to have influenced some major local planning decisions, including the abandonment of the proposal for a Lower Manhattan Expressway; she denounces unwarranted demolitions and TV-dinners:

> It may be an indulgence to point out, for that useless thing called history, that the old Washington Market, now semi-demolished as part of a thirty-eight-acre renewal area, was a very special place, like Covent Garden in London or Les Halles in Paris, the latter also on the way out. (There is already a frozen-food teeny-bopper generation that never knew it.)

"Criticism of this sort," admits Mrs. Huxtable, "has an unavoidable messianic sound. Instead of dealing in the pleasant esoterica of esthetics, one finds oneself at querulous and sometimes tiresome odds with ignorance, bureaucracy, cupidity and political and personal opportunism." She continues, notwithstanding, to plug along be-

[1] WILL THEY EVER FINISH BRUCKNER BOULEVARD?, by *Ada Louise Huxtable.* Macmillan. $7.95.

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cause "I believe in the present . . . one of the greatest and most challenging periods in history. . . . It is the age of the skyscraper . . . but it is also the age that has turned the dream of a better world into a fouled environment." What she writes about (with such dustballs of shyster prose) is a new phenomenon: the technological resourcefulness to do almost anything almost overnight to the looks and uses of a city, especially so coveted a city as New York; for she loves "the dynamic vitality and brutal beauty of this strange and wonderful town," and it is too bad that her lyrics insist on music by Bernstein and choreography by Robbins: "Can anyone stand unmoved at the top of a steel-framed skyscraper today, looking out across a city's glittering twentieth-century towers, glass walls reflecting clouds, sky and structures in a massed, changing pattern of light and color? . . ."

Mrs. Huxtable would rather, if it weren't for her sense of duty, sink into "the pleasant esoterica of esthetics," by which one assumes she means the criticism of such harmless arts as literature, music, painting. It's a fact that the critic of a book is unencumbered by social responsibility: "I like it" or "I loathe it," he says, and nobody cares or blinks except the author. The critic—or, for that matter, the creator—of books or pictures doesn't cause skyscrapers or expressways to dematerialize or happen; art, after all, is only personal. The critic of buildings may imagine that he has the whole wide (urban) world in his hands, but the critic of a book—even of Mrs. Huxtable's book, teeming with all the opinions and indignation by means of which bookish people everywhere persuade themselves that they are or ought to be turning the wheels of the world—luckily the critic of a book isn't attacking faith, hope, and charity, he's only criticizing a book.

It's difficult to be serious enough nowadays, the issues are so grand and pressing. Architecture—which in New York is synonymous with environment—is what the entire community lives in and looks at, like it or not; it is the least escapable condition of living and looking. "The dignity of the environment," says Mrs. Huxtable, "has a lot to do with the dignity of man"; and she is talking not about square footage and plumbing per family unit, but messianically about what she conceives as the public's tropism toward certified monuments and historic continuity. For Mrs. Huxtable's idea of the public, buildings loom like nightmares or happy dreams, the Pan Am jostling the Seagram in the bombarded collective mind, which expands or withers in fulfillment or deprivation among the instantaneously apprehended qualities of its surroundings: medals for the Ford Foundation headquarters; hoots for the latest nameless or commemorative Federal horror; execrations of the latest effort to deface or diminish Central Park; cheers for those who rescue and recondition historic structures. It's important, it's *necessary* to be serious enough on behalf of the inarticulate taste of the public; and Mrs. Huxtable is very serious,

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exasperated, knowledgeable, full of élitist scorn and assurance as she rebukes Congressional ignoramuses—

> Whether this solution represents the last gasp of what all indications point to as Mr. Stewart's almost surrealistically reactionary taste, or if it is the taste of less-than-swinging senior Congressmen convinced of their Olympian omniscience, or the taste of the architects who did the job, is hard to determine. . . . And one reads pages of debate in the Congressional Record, with sinking heart, in which grown men with distinguished names display the wilful ignorance of stubborn children. They may not know if it's architecture, but they know what they like and they are building about half-a-billion-dollars' worth of it . . .

—or congratulates laymen for having the tact to stand out of the way:

> [The Everson Museum of Art] . . . has been designed by I. M. Pei and Partners, with the sensitive collaboration of the museum's director Max Sullivan and the sensible backing of an obviously non-meddling board of trustees whose faith in professionalism has been justified by the results. . . .

If we learned to trust the professionals, everything would turn out right. It isn't only the real-estate speculators who make the trouble; it's also the childish rich and powerful who want their culture dispensed in a not altogether unrecognizable setting, as when, having sponsored and paid for the Atlanta Arts Center, they can't resist decorating it with a nostalgic, "unfunctional" old-plantation colonnade; it's even the public itself, frivolously ready to settle for comfort and entertainment, as at Lincoln Center:

> What we have, architecturally, are four buildings designed to accommodate opera, drama, dance, musical theater, concerts and film festivals—no small cultural package. Three played it safe: Philharmonic Hall, the State Theater and the Metropolitan Opera are lushly decorated, conservative structures that the public finds pleasing and most professionals consider a failure of nerve, imagination and talent . . .

—a failure that Mrs. Huxtable, having condemned the package, thinks she has the style and authority to attribute to the contents also:

> There is, finally, the question of culture, around which the whole complex revolves. If we define culture as average to expertly executed established and familiar fare, available to many people in maximum comfort, Lincoln Center is providing an impressive amount of it.
>
> But there is no culture without creativity, and there is no meaningful culture of any period without that vital spark of fresh ideas and new forms that, fanned into brilliance by the greater epochs, becomes the enduring expression of an age. This is art,

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> and culture, whether it appears in a cellar, a slum, or the back room of a bar. It has not appeared in Lincoln Center.
>
> It is, after all, by the standards of art that all art must be judged. As entertainment, Lincoln Center promises to be an operational success. By creative measurements, much of its product and most of its plant are an artistic failure. And that is why its expensively suave, extravagantly commonplace presence is making a great many people in the fine and performing arts profoundly uneasy.

Who are these people she has heard from (Beckett? Picasso? Stravinsky?), and what is *their* authority? She never tells us. If she hasn't conjured them up out of hot air, they are very likely the "avant-garde" (an okay word for her, together with "adventurous") of actors, playwrights, modern dancers, and aleatory musicians who explain over cocktails to the sophisticated lady with the *Times* by-line just what is backward and culturally stifling about dear old George and charming Lenny.

Pronouncing on Lincoln Center, she doesn't tell us what she herself, comes the revelation, would substitute for such crowd-pleasing mediocrities as Karajan conducting Wagner at the Met, Boulez conducting *le Sacre* with the Philharmonic, and of course Balanchine—whom, besides the deluded public, some professionals consider the greatest choreographer in history—directing his own company in an almost year-round repertory of his ballets composed between the 'twenties and the middle of last week. But elsewhere, during her assault on the Atlanta Arts Center, she drops a single incautious hint by praising "Theater Atlanta, known for its high caliber, free-ranging productions. Concurrent with the Arts Center opening, it put on a wonderfully sharp, witty, irreverent biting and pertinent satire called *Red, White and Maddox";* this is the only "work of art," except for her buildings, that she mentions in her book; so her taste, when she coyly unbuttons it, appears to be for zingy topical commentary at the level of a high-school revue: "pertinent" (or "relevant"), political, and probably ecological.

Very rarely, Mrs. Huxtable attempts humility:

> . . . architecture is now breaking scale, and style, everywhere. (There is hardly an architect who in his secret heart doesn't want to be the one to do it.) The objective historian realizes that the twentieth century is in transition to a remarkable new technology and a formidable new environment before we have learned how to handle the old ones. Who's afraid of the big, bad buildings? Everyone, because there are so many things about gigantism that we just don't know. . . .

True enough, there are so many things we just don't know. We don't know how far technology determines proportion irrespective o. aca-

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demic critics; we don't know what—or whether—any peculiar virtue invests the lives of people who inhabit unalterable museum-cities like Florence and Venice. We don't for instance know, despite Mrs. Huxtable's confidence, what effect buildings of professionally or otherwise endorsed beauty or hideousness have on the lives of people who walk past them or live or work in them daily—all romanticisms collapse under the fact of man's adaptiveness, his appetite for change, his resistance to persistent external claims on his attention, the variety of his interests and purposes in a city or anywhere else: ubiquitous beauty, official or otherwise, may be as much a bore or a hole in the retina as ubiquitous ugliness; the Eiffel Tower or Mount Shasta is eventually a picture on a beer can or nothing at all. Planners and critics of environments, who practice like virtuosos on the exposed nerves of the newspaper-reading public, aren't yet in a position to do much but list and emphasize some of the more imminent problems of technology; and it doesn't help if their only personal resources are invective, conventional or puerile taste, and a pocket dictionary of critical jargon.

Nevertheless Mrs. Huxtable is ambitious. In 1913 Ezra Pound reported from Paris that a group of artists ("the antennae of the race") had called a meeting there to protest the earthquake at Messina. Those avant-gardists give her something to aim at.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(Act of October 23, 1962; Section 4369, Title 39, United States Code)

1. DATE OF FILING: September 29, 1970. 2. TITLE OF PUBLICATION: The Hudson Review.
3. FREQUENCY OF ISSUE: Quarterly
4. LOCATION OF KNOWN OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 2901 Byrdhill Road, Richmond, Virginia 23205.
5. LOCATION OF THE HEADQUARTERS OR GENERAL BUSINESS OFFICES OF THE PUBLISHERS: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
6. NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF PUBLISHER, EDITOR, AND MANAGING EDITOR.
PUBLISHER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
EDITOR: Frederick Morgan, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
MANAGING EDITOR: Irene Skolnick, 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022.
7. OWNER: The Hudson Review, Inc., 65 East 55th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022, a New York membership corporation not authorized to issue stock, whose members are: Joseph Bennett, Paula Deitz, Edmund T. Delaney, Frederick Morgan and Irene Skolnick, all same address.
8. KNOWN BONDHOLDERS, MORTGAGEES, AND OTHER SECURITY HOLDERS OWNING OR HOLDING 1 PERCENT OR MORE OF TOTAL AMOUNT OF BONDS, MORTGAGES OR OTHER SECURITIES: None.

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	Actual No. of Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total No. Copies Printed *(Net Press Run)*	3306	3500
B. Paid Circulation		
1. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors and Counter Sales	400	425
2. Mail Subscriptions	2726	2795
C. Total Paid Circulation	3126	3220
D. Free Distribution *(including samples)* by Mail, Carrier or Other Means	80	80
E. Total Distribution *(Sum of C and D)*	3206	3300
F. Office Use, Left-Over, Unaccounted, Spoiled after Printing	100	200
G. Total *(Sum of E &F—should equal net press run shown in A)*	3306	3500

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ROGER SALE

The Great Reviewer

MARVIN MUDRICK PUBLISHED HIS FIRST ESSAY for this magazine in the fall of 1954, and since then has almost *become* THE HUDSON REVIEW; by my rough count his fine essay on Dr. Johnson in last summer's issue was his fortieth contribution. This is probably a record of some kind, one that seems especially remarkable because Mudrick does not make his living as a writer and because he never writes a bad piece. Rereading the whole run, I was struck first and most strongly by the high quality. Mudrick, we know, is learned, witty, grim, quick to scorn and delighted to praise, but also, all these qualities are at work and at play all the time. A second, correlative impression is that when Mudrick is not writing he must be reading; there simply are not enough hours in the day for anything else. Not long ago the man whose office is next to mine, David Wagoner, had his fifth novel reviewed by Mudrick in THE HUDSON REVIEW. Mudrick had not liked the novel very much, but, not content with that, he had gone back and read Wagoner's first four before describing his opinion of the fifth. Wagoner was understandably not very happy at Mudrick's dislike of his novels, but more than that he was dumbfounded by Mudrick's procedure. I could only tell him that this was just like Mudrick, and also that I too knew no one else who would read five novels by a man in order to be able to level against one in just the terms he wanted.

Readers of THE HUDSON REVIEW cannot help knowing Marvin Mudrick, but it is not clear just who else knows him or what impression they have. Back in 1952 he published *Jane Austen: Irony as Defense and Discovery,* which is rather too convinced of itself for me but which also was just about the first good book ever written on Jane Austen; later Mudrick edited a collection of essays on Conrad, and he seems at one time or another to have been working on books on Chaucer and Colette which were never finished; his "The Orginality of *The Rainbow*" has been reprinted often enough by now to be known at least to most Lawrentians. Still, it must be that it is for his essays and reviews in this magazine that Mudrick is best known, and it should be added at once that anyone who feels that herein lies a falling off because reviewing is at best high-class hackwork, has not read Mudrick in sufficient bulk.

The question of collecting one's reviews and incidental essays, though, has always been a ticklish one, and while Mudrick is at least as aware of the dangers as anyone else—see, especially, his "The Possibility of Criticism" in THE HUDSON REVIEW for Autumn, 1962—he does not seem altogether to have solved the problem in com-

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piling *On Literature and Culture,* a gathering of seventeen essays and reviews, eleven of which first appeared in these pages.[1] Lots of people collect their essays, and lots of reviewers discuss the rights and wrongs of so doing, but for a number of reasons Mudrick's collection present somewhat special problems. One way of stating them is to say that those reviews on which the reviewer has to work the hardest are the fiction chronicles, yet these are the ones that can seem the most ephemeral ten years later. Mudrick has written many of these over the years, and almost every one has something special about it that makes it seem worth remembering, but one can understand why they do not seem to fit in a collection in a book. Omnibus reviews depend greatly on the books being reviewed, and the most one can do is to quote honestly and judge quickly; if the books themselves are not, in the light of later reflection, worth even the five hundred words per book that can be spent on them, then there is not much the reviewer can do about it. So, in making *On Culture and Literature,* Mudrick has kept out all his omnibus fiction reviews, and instead offered a book which, the jacket copy says, moves "from Lady Murasaki and Chaucer to Casanova, Tolstoy and Shaw, from Eliot and Hemingway to Haggin, Bellow, Oscar Lewis, Mailer and Harold Rosenberg." If one assumes that some principle of selection had to be found, then Mudrick was probably right to choose his work on those authors who are much more likely than the average novelist to remain themselves of interest. But an admirer wants to cavil, to say that the book represents his best work and reflects his greatest virtues only in part.

To call Marvin Mudrick a great reviewer is not just to say that he writes great reviews. It is to say also that certain qualities which he exemplifies better than anyone else, qualities which are absolutely essential to a reviewer but not as important in others, obtain in Mudrick's prose whether or not he is writing a review. A reviewer needs, most of all, good taste and the ability to say a lot in very few words. He does not need, and indeed is probably better off doing without, the capacity to construct an independent argument; we all know and distrust writers who use reviews as occasions to rehearse their own ideas on a subject. The work under consideration must be judged, but it also must be allowed to exist independently of the reviewer's judgment, and at allowing books so to exist there is no one better than Mudrick. A great deal of this skill involves the capacity to quote well, which means choosing for quotation not only those passages which are useful for proving the reviewer's point but choosing those passages which are honestly representative of the whole book. An omnibus review by Mudrick is often more than half quotation, which is in itself not perhaps a good thing, but which,

[1] ON CULTURE AND LITERATURE, by *Marvin Mudrick.* Horizon. $7.50.

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when one sees how quickly and well Mudrick can shepherd his quotations into a tasteful judgment by adding just a little of his own, seems exactly the right way to do it.

When the book being reviewed is a novel, such quotation and comment often are enough. When the book is about another book or subject, however, the conditions of reviewing may often impose limitations on the reviewer which may be necessary but also regrettable. When Mudrick reviewed John Bayley's book on Tolstoy, for instance, he rightly chose to focus on Bayley and to let his ideas on Tolstoy remain a matter of inference and of quickly stated perceptions. But when the review is put into a book, and becomes, as it were, a chapter, not called "One Bear Too Many" but "Tolstoy," the result is deflecting. One wants Mudrick on Tolstoy, and Mudrick on Bayley seems a less adequate substitute than it did when the piece was published as a review. So it is with the pieces in this book on Shaw and Eliot; the reviewing conditions seem too limiting. Interestingly, Mudrick has made some real and important changes in his review of Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, because, he says, that book "no longer seems to me so wonderful a recovery of Hemingway's powers as it did then." But he need not have apologized that way, because in praising early Hemingway stories directly rather than inferentially, in saying why he thinks Hemingway should be considered primarily as a writer of stories, he has changed a good review into a good essay, which is something quite different from modifying one's earlier views. I wish Mudrick had tried similar transformations with other reviews, not because any change of heart is called for, but just because the possibilities offered by the different format could have been acknowledged to the advantage of both the books and their critic.

One reason Mudrick did not try to change more essays when he began compiling his book is that temperamentally he is so completely a reviewer that he may not have seen what more he could do; and in most of those essays which were not originally written as reviews we can see his reviewer's habits at work nonetheless. In one case, the essay/review of Casanova's *History of My Life*, the difference between one critical genre and another can barely be felt; here is an author about whom there is little to do except celebrate, and so Mudrick quotes, wonderfully and often, celebrating. But in other cases more of an argument seems to be called for, so that when Mudrick's essay on Lady Murasaki turns out to be really a long review of *The Tale of Genji*, one feels disappointed that Mudrick keeps himself under wraps. That Mudrick knows that often the acts of evocation and judging are not enough is most apparent in this volume in his very short essay, "Chaucer's Nightingales," which evokes a great deal and which praises Chaucer wonderfully, but by means of building up an argument about Chaucer and "nature" in comparison with *King Lear*:

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> What Lear discovers after catastrophe and madness Chaucer has been continuously instructing us in by an unillusioned examination of image and metaphor from the beginning: that nothing—no power or vanity of language or of temporary human comfort—can save man from the recognition of his own solitude and eventual powerlessness. Tragedy is beyond sulphurous and thought-executing fires, as it is also beyond larks and nightingales.

These are big sentences, not like those of most critics, and not easily possible in a review, and when I say their point and power cannot really be grasped without reading the whole essay which they conclude, I am saying that here Mudrick has built an argument as he so seldom does. Drawing back from such arguing is characteristic of most Mudrick, just as the overarguing and reducing of literature to a scale altogether too manageable is characteristic of most criticism. It is as though Mudrick were reacting against such a tendency to murder by dissecting and, in doing so, restricted himself too often to performing the reviewer's essential tasks of quoting and briefly judging. In reviews, of course, this is no defect at all, but in independent essays it can be.

Another way, perhaps, of making the same point is to come at it from the opposite direction, and to say that in making his selection he has not only exposed his general unwillingness to build up large arguments but also has excluded too many of his great short bursts. Many of these come when he is talking about an unimportant or even a downright bad author, but they are in their way terribly good and, furthermore, almost Mudrick's way of stamping the reviewer's task as his own. I would like to quote some here just to show the kind of thing I mean, and to try to move thereby to some further assessment of Mudrick that *On Culture and Literature,* when taken by itself, does not really allow for:

> . . . but he isn't bashful, he carries on without a blink, authoritatively elucidating the sheer horror of thinking.

> . . . nothing so naked as a surface or an animal could survive the armored-car redundancies of Mme. Bree's *Yale French Studies* prose.

> Mr. Price seems determined to prove that for Southern writers every sex act, as a matter of phallic principle, confirms the superiority of the male, infallibly fertilizes, and must be celebrated in the smuggest and most simplistic agricultural metaphors.

> Sergius himself, appointed by Mailer to survey the mystery, is a grand lacuna into which whole chapters topple and vanish.

> With a little luck, it may yet turn out to be the worst novel ever written.

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Of these five, only the fourth appears in *On Culture and Literature,* about which omission more can and should be said than more's the pity.

One has heard the objection to this kind of writing many times: it is Style, it calls attention to itself, it celebrates the reviewer at the expense of the book or author reviewed, etc. Those who take this line will admire *On Culture and Literature* because, given the bulk of Mudrick's work, it contains relatively little of this kind of thing. Worse still, they may take this fact as a sign that Mudrick in essence agrees with them, and recognizes that in deciding what should be permanently enshrined in a book, it becomes time to put away childish things like those swinging, slambang sentences I've quoted. Marvin Mudrick has read more bad novels and as many good novels as anyone I know or can imagine, and he has read them with at least as much attention as most of them warrant. When he says about Françoise Sagan's *Aimez-Vous Brahms?* "With a little luck, it may yet turn out to be the worst novel ever written," I feel that he may well be right and that he is even expressing his own kind of hope, even optimism, in saying so; it would be wonderful to think that the worst novel that was ever to be written was now safely behind us. The point is truly expressive, not only of a judgment but of that judgment's capacity to articulate a sense of life. Rather than trying to make more of one incidental sentence than perhaps should be made, however, let me consider another example of greater length.

In one of his very best reviews, of the Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson anthology, *The Modern Tradition,* Mudrick offers the following list of what the book includes, about which I am sure that it could and has been claimed that Mudrick is only exercising his sense of superiority to the anthologizers:

> The editors throw in something for all tastes: Vico because Joyce was a Viconian; stale chestnuts like Arnold on the future of poetry and I. A. Richards on the pseudo-statement; Santayana in his role as aesthete of Catholicism (There is no God, and Mary is His mother); Paul Tillich stuffing meaninglessness into meaning, disbelief into piety, hats into rabbits; Proust of course with his soggy madeleine; Malraux on the "museum without walls"; Henry Adams scared to death by the new and American century of profane power.

One must hope that Ellmann and Feidelson, reading that and feeling Mudrick was shooting at easy targets, liked the phrases about Tillich; still, if that list were all there was to Mudrick's judgment they might be right in feeling misrepresented by their reviewer. But the point is that Mudrick's voracious energy, learning, and taste are all at work, just as they are in the sentence about Françoise Sagan; he is not just having fun. He quotes the passage from Henry Adams in question —it is the opening of the last chapter of *The Education*—then closes his review with this:

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> Perhaps Adams was on the right track, the editors might have taken a tip from him: that the modern is America, unbounded centrifugal energy spinning away from the totem of history. Take as epigraph from Donne's Elegy XIX the line, "O my America! my new-found-land," which denotes the naked body of his mistress as he explores it for its own sake and his: no spiritual preparations, no coyness, no fainting spells, no Don-Juanish palaver; pure profane activity in a new world, out of bounds. For an introduction, Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literaure* (which the editors don't see fit to use in *their* book on the modern) will do very well, and is more entertaining than Vico. Then forget Europe and see how far you can go without stumbling on its ubiquitous relics. Anyhow it's an idea, which is more than Messrs. Ellmann and Feidelson, for all their impressive labors, have come up with.

There is an air about that last sentence which implies the whole thing has been tossed off, but of course, it hasn't been.

One can, for example, take that sentence about Donne's line and do three things with it, and it works each time. Take it first, and almost irrelevantly, as an evocation of Donne's tone in the poem. Take it second in the context of the list of ubiquitous European relics quoted above, and read Mudrick's phrases as criticism of the objects on that list that is much more accurate than snotty. Take it third as an evocation of America as we all know it; suddenly the country seems both as wonderful as Donne's line and as scary as Adams' passage. And—as familiar as the world around us. The result may not be what is usually called an idea, but one begins to see how much thinking lies behind it.

The point, then, is that Mudrick earns his tones, all of them, and that it is in reviewing that he has found a wonderful way to move his tone around gracefully, wildly, carefully. *On Culture and Literature* is disappointing because it does not really reveal this, because perhaps no collection selected with certain principles in mind could reveal it. It is not simply a matter of variety, though that does seem important when one places the collection of essays beside the whole run of Mudrick's work, but also a matter of stance. The reviewer always must implicitly accept the world because he does not choose his subjects, really, and while this often is a curse it creates advantages too, especially for someone as restless and energetic as Mudrick. The tone must be constantly capable of shifting, and when it can do this it can also persuade that the tone used at any one moment is precisely the one called for. The reviewer may master his tones, but that mastery is in itself an acknowledgment and celebration of the fact that the world cannot be mastered. His power of evoking is a sign of this, his refusal to argue at great length is a sign of this, his flexibility in judging is a sign of this, his endless willingness to pick up a new book is a sign of this. To put the matter this way is

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not to make reviewing something totally different from other kinds of criticism; it is only to suggest why it might be that though *On Culture and Literature* is not as good a book as *Selected Essays,* T. S. Eliot was not as good a reviewer as Marvin Mudrick is.

So I think Mudrick was in something of a bind when he came to make his book. He could have included the review of *The Modern Tradition* all right, and the wonderful "The End of the World or Else," which ends with stunning quotation-and-comment on R. Buckminster Fuller, but the difficulty would still be there: so much of what seems finest about Mudrick comes in bursts, in phrases that seem at times almost incidental, in comments that come after long quotations from which they cannot be torn loose and which may not in themselves be worth a great deal. Mudrick's solution was to make himself a little more solemn than he is, and less restless and insistent. He is himself such a good writer on the novel (and surely it is not accidental that in his forty contributions to this magazine there is not one poetry chronicle or one essay which treats a poet primarily as a poet) because the novel, like Mudrick, knows no rules, is wary of allegory, and is eager to take the next thing that comes along on its own terms. Yet this is not something he could have gotten in any book shorter than his complete works. Its essential quality is to exist for the sake of the particular novel he is writing about, and to convey only cumulatively his sense of the variousness of the novel as corresponding to the peopledness of life, each one in need of a care expressive of the uniqueness of the individual work. Given that care, he is often dour, severe, disappointed; novels make him feel that way just as people can, and Mudrick knows why he wants to take one as our best sign of the other:

> There are no longer any communities, or religions, or emblems, or spirits. But there are persons; and so fiction—all that prose which drives out devils—is still with us and will have to do.

"All That Prose" is the title of this omnibus fiction review; "Man Alive" is that of another; "Is Fiction Human?" that of still a third. Perhaps the best way to praise Marvin Mudrick is to say that, like a great novelist, in producing the first of these he creates the second and so answers the third affirmatively, and in ways that make *now* matter.

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AUTHORS

Adams, Robert Martin:
Bounding "Lycidas" 293
The State of the Dean *(review)* .. 578
Ammons, A. R.: Essay on Poetics *(poem)* 425
Bennett, Joseph: From an Egyptian Diary *(report)* 585
A Greek Island *(poem)* 681
Bergonzi, Bernard: Little Aldous and the Cockroach Man *(review)* 377
Letter from England 599
Berry, Wendell: A Secular Pilgrimage 401
The Unforeseen Wilderness 633
Carruth, Hayden: End of the Sixties *(review)* 180
Independence Man 204
I Know, I Remember, but How Can I Help You; The End Again; This Decoration; Too Tenuous; Rimrock; Where It Is *(poems)* ... 672
Cioran, E. M.: Encounter with the Void 37
Cruttwell, Patrick: Blake, Tradition, and Miss Raine *(review)* 133
Fresh Skins for New Wine *(review)* 546
Davenport, Guy: C'est Magnifique Mais Ce N'est Pas Daguerre *(review)* 154
Where Poems Come From *(review)* 339
Ezra Pound, the Poet? *(review)* .. 754
Dickey, William: A Time of Common Speech *(review)* 344
Enright, D. J.: Board of Selection *(poem)* 276
Farber, Stephen: Couples 103
Women in Love 321
Melodramatic Truths 685
Gardner, John: Desire on Sunday Morning; Lenten is Come with Love: An Imitation; Setting for an Old Welsh Line *(poems)* 28
Garis, Robert: Anti-Literary Biography *(review)* 143
Ghose, Zulfikar: In the Desert *(poem)* 275
Haggin, B. H.: Music and Ballet Chronicles 122, 311, 522, 710
Harvor, Beth: Pain Was My Portion *(story)* 495
Hemschemeyer, Judith: In the Mountains *(poem)* 89
Hobdell, Roger: Night Horse on the Silk Road *(poem)* 17
The Frontiers of Summer *(poem)* 677
Kauffmann, Stanley: An Album *(memoir)* 67
Lattimore, Richmond: In Memoriam; The Lake Island of Iannina; First Flight; The Last Train out of White River Junction; Atlantis Now; The Flowering Meadows; When you are old: after Ronsard *(poems)* 666
Levine, Philip: To a Fish Head Found on the Beach Near Málaga; Hola Miguelin!; Autumn; I Choose You *(poems)* 247
Lippard, Lucy R.: Museo, Museas, Museat 6
Max Ernst: Passed and Pressing Tensions 701
Mandelstam, Osip: Fourth Prose *(story)*, tr. by Clarence Brown .. 49
Meatyard, Ralph Eugene: Photographs ff.633
Merwin, W. S.: Under the Migrants; End of Summer; The Clear Skies *(poems)* 450
Meyerowitz, Joel: Photographs ff.480
Millard, Charles W.: The New Boston: City Hall 110
Edgar Degas 305
Matisse in Paris 540
Paul Klee 696
Morgan, Frederick: Editorial 339
Morse, J. Mitchell: Fiction Chronicle *(review)* 327
Guslars and Gospelers *(review)* .. 557
Mudrick, Marvin: The Ogre at the Feast of Life 278
Rumors of Mighty Victories *(review)* 767
Paul, David: A Young, Late Pharaoh *(poem)* 683
Paz, Octavio: The Revolt of the Body, tr. by Monique Fong 648
Peck, John: The Upper Trace; Spring Journey *(poems)* 84
Porter, Norman: This One and That One; O Sister; Number *(poems)* 86
Pritchard, William H.: Sense of Reality *(review)* 154
Tones of Criticism *(review)* 365

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shags and Poets *(review)* 563
Frost Departmentalized *(review)* 747
Roberts, Dorothy: Fall, Shadows; Boat on the Beach *(poems)* 452
Rosenberg, John D.: Varieties of Infernal Experience 454
Said, Edward W.: A Standing Civil War *(review)* 759
Sale, Roger: Thinking About Cities *(review)* 171
Scholarly Books *(review)* 355
The Great Reviewer *(review)* 772
Sandy, Stephen: Waiting for the Warden *(poem)* 684
Seattle, Chief: Address to Governor Isaac Stevens 492
Simon, John: Theatre Chronicles 91, 721
Grotowski's Grotesqueries 510
Snyder, Gary: O *(poem)* 449
Stafford: William: Wherever Anything Can Turn, Thought Can Turn; For A While; Wind World; For the Shtick People; Cloves *(poems)* 199
At Home on Earth *(review)* 481
Ungaretti, Giuseppe: Little Monologue *(poem)*, tr. by Charles Tomlinson 22
Vanderbilt, Paul: Photographs .. ff.448
Whyte, Lancelot Law: Towards a Science of Form 613
Wright, James: Humming a Tune for an Old Lady in West Virginia; To a Dead Drunk; Moon; A Poem About Breasts *(poems)* 80
Young, Vernon: Films from Hungary and Brazil 116
Cinema Borealis 252
Reflections on Two American Films 533
October Thoughts *(review)* 733

BOOKS REVIEWED

"A" 13-21, by Louis Zukofsky: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Adam's Dream, by Julia Randall: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Aguila O Sol? (Eagle or Sun?), by Octavio Paz, tr. by Eliot Weinberger: *Vernon Young* 733
Allegiances, by William Stafford: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The Alligator Bride: Poems New and Selected, by Donald Hall: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Alone With America, by Richard Howard: *William H. Pritchard* .. 563
America's Changing Environment, ed. by Roger Revelle and Hans H. Lansberg: *William Stafford* .. 481
An American Romance, by Carol Bergé: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Animae, by W. S. Merwin: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Anonymous Sins and Other Poems, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Art of the American Folk Preacher, by Bruce A. Rosenberg: *J. Mitchell Morse* 557
The Bamboo Bed, by William Eastlake: *Guy Davenport* 154
The Bay of Noon, by Shirley Hazzard: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Bearings, by Jack Marshall: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Beyond All This Fiddle, by A. Alvarez: *William H. Pritchard* .. 365
The Bible as Literature, by T. R. Henn: *Patrick Cruttwell* 546
Biology and the Future of Man, ed. by Philip Handler: *William Stafford* 481
Black Pow-wow, by Ted Joans: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Blake and Tradition, by Kathleen Raine: *Patrick Cruttwell* 133
Bodies and Shadows, by Peter Weiss: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Broken Laws, by Daniel Hoffman: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The Burden of the Past and the English Poet, by W. Jackson Bate: *Roger Sale* 355
The Carrier of Ladders, by W. S. Merwin: *Vernon Young* 733
Challenge for Survival, ed. by Pierre

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dansereau: *William Stafford* 481
Children Are Civilians Too, by Heinrich Böll: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
A Chosen Light, by John Montague: *Vernon Young* 733
City Without Walls, by W. H. Auden: *William Dickey* 344
Coat on a Stick: Late Poems, by Rolfe Humphries: *William Dickey* 344
The Collected Essays and Occasional Writings of Katherine Anne Porter: *William H. Pritchard* 365
The Colonel's Photograph and Other Stories, by Eugène Ionesco: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Coming Out Fighting, by Philip Hobsbaum: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Common Shore, by Robert Kelly: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Collected Poems, by Ruth Pitter: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Cosmos, by Witold Gombrowicz: *Guy Davenport* 154
The Country of a Thousand Years of Peace, by James Merrill: *Vernon Young* 733
Dancing on Water, by Harold Bond: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Darker, by Mark Strand: *Vernon Young* 733
Deliverance, by James Dickey: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Design With Nature, by Ian L. McHarg: *William Stafford* 481
The Dolphin with the Revolver in Its Teeth, by George Hitchcock: *Vernon Young* 733
Dreaming of Floods, by Stuart Frieberg: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Earth Walk: New and Selected Poems, by William Meredith: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The Economy of Cities, by Jane Jacobs: *Roger Sale* 171
The End of the Twentieth Century?, by Desmond King-Hele: *William Stafford* 481
The Entrance to Porlock, by Frederick Buechner: *William H. Pritchard* 162
The Environmental Revolution, by Max Nicholson: *William Stafford* 481
Expressways, by J. D. Reed: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Eye-Beaters, Blood, Victory, Madness, Buckhead and Mercy, by James Dickey: *William H. Pritchard* 563
A Fairly Good Time, by Mavis Gallant: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
A Fairly Honourable Defeat, by Iris Murdoch: *William H. Pritchard* 162
False Gods, Real Men, by Daniel Berrigan: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Fever and Other New Poems, by Bella Akhmadulina, tr. by Geoffrey Dutton and Igor Mezhakoff-Koriakin: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Fifty Poems Fifty, by Reed Whittemore: *Vernon Young* 733
Fire Gardens, by Ivan V. Lalic, tr. by Charles Simic and C. W. Truesdale: *Vernon Young* 733
The Fire Screen, by James Merrill: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Foreign Bodies, by Karl Krolow, tr. by Michael Bullock: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Form and Frenzy in Swift's Tale of a Tub, by John R. Clark: *Robert Martin Adams* 578
Fragment, by John Ashbery: *Hayden Carruth* 180
From the Academy Bridge, by P. M. Pasinetti: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
A Further Collection of Chinese Lyrics, tr. by Alan Ayling and Duncan Mackintosh: *Vernon Young* 733
The Garbage Wars, by Donald Finkel: *William H. Pritchard* ... 563
The Geography of Lograire, by Thomas Merton: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Girl Who Sang With the Beatles, by Robert Hemenway: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Good Times, by Lucille Clifton: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Graves Registry, by Keith Wilson: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Great American Jackpot, by Herbert Gold: *William H. Pritchard* 162
Green Business, by John N. Morris: *Vernon Young* 733
The Gulf, by Derek Walcott: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Happiness and Other Stories, by Mary Lavin: *J. Mitchell Morse* .. 327
The Heron, by Giorgio Bassani: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
A Horse and Two Goats, by R. K. Narayan: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Horst Bienek *(poems)*, tr. by Ruth and Matthew Mead: *Vernon Young* 733

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Huxleys, by Ronald W. Clark: *Bernard Bergonzi* 377
Idanre and Other Poems, by Wole Soyinka: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Iconographs, by May Swenson: *Vernon Young* 733
In Transit, by Brigid Brophy: *William H. Pritchard* 162
In Watermelon Sugar, by Richard Brautigan: *Guy Davenport* 154
Indiana, by Clayton Eshleman: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Intensive Care, by Janet Frame: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Jakob Von Gunter, by Robert Walser: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Jonathan Swift: A Critical Introduction, by Denis Donoghue: *Robert Martin Adams* 578
Journal of Return, by Richard Shelton: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Just Over the Border, by F. D. Reeve: *Guy Davenport* 154
Letters of Aldous Huxley, ed. by Grover Smith: *Bernard Bergonzi* 377
Lies, by C. K. Williams: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Life and Loves of Mr. Jiveass Nigger, by Cecil Brown: *William H. Pritchard* 162
The Life of Ezra Pound, by Noel Stock: *Guy Davenport* 754
Local Anaesthetic, by Günter Grass: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Losing Battles, by Eudora Welty: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Maggot and Worm, by M. M. Liberman: *William H. Pritchard* 162
The Man With the Black Mouth, by R. G. Vliet: *Vernon Young* .. 733
Marcoré, by Antonio Olavo Pereira: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Meat Air, by Ron Loewinsohn: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Memoirs of Hector Berlioz, tr. and ed. by David Cairns: *B. H. Haggin* 522
The Metaphysical Mode from Donne to Cowley, by Earl Miner: *Roger Sale* 355
The Miner's Pale Children, by W. S. Merwin: *Vernon Young* 733
Mr. Sammler's Planet, by Saul Bellow: *William H. Pritchard* 162
Modern Writers and Other Essays, by Stuart N. Hampshire: *William H. Pritchard* 365
Musical Impressions: Selections from Paul Rosenfeld's Criticism, ed. by Herbert A. Leibowitz: *B. H. Haggin* 122
A New Decade, Poems 1958-1967, by Pablo Neruda, tr. by Ben Belitt and Alastair Reid: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The New English Bible, With the Apocrypha: *Patrick Cruttwell* ... 546
New Lives, New Landscapes, by Nan Fairbrother: *William Stafford* 481
New Poems, by John Holloway: *Vernon Young* 733
New Poetry of Mexico, ed. by Mark Strand: *Vernon Young* 733
A New Voyage to the Country of the Houyhnhnms, ed. by Matthew Hodgart: *William H. Pritchard* .. 563
Notes to the Hurrying Man, by Brian Patten: *Hayden Carruth* . 180
Nunquam, by Lawrence Durrell: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
The Oblivion Ha-Ha, by James Tate: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Olt, by Kenneth Gangemi: *William H. Pritchard* 162
On Bear's Head, by Philip Whalen: *William Dickey* 344
On Culture and Literature, by Marvin Mudrick: *Roger Sale* 772
One Hundred Years of Solitude, by Gabriel García Marquez: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
The Only Earth We Have, by Laurence Pringle: *William Stafford* 481
A Pagan Place, by Edna O'Brien: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
The Party at Mrs. Purefoy's, by Ward Dorrance: *Guy Davenport* 154
Pieces, by Robert Creeley: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Pilgrims, by Jean Valentine: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Poems, 1965-1968, by Robert Graves: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Poems of Solitude, tr. by Jerome Ch'en and Michael Bullock: *Vernon Young* 733
Poetry of Francis Warner: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The Poetry of Robert Frost, ed. by Edward Connery Lathem: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Post-War Polish Poetry, ed. and tr. by Czeslaw Milosz: *Vernon Young* 773
Pretending To Be Asleep, by Peter Davison: *William H. Pritchard* .. 563

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pricksongs and Descants, by Robert Coover: *Guy Davenport* 154
A Probable Volume of Dreams, by Marvin Bell: *Hayden Carruth* .. 180
Reason Awake, by René Dubos: *William Stafford* 481
Relearning the Alphabet, by Denise Levertov: *William H. Pritchard* .. 563
The Resolved Soul, by Anne E. Berthoff: *Roger Sale* 355
Retrospectives and Conclusions, by Igor Stravinsky and Robert Craft: *B. H. Haggin* 710
Rivers of the Pacific Northwest, by William Dickey: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Robert Frost: The Years of Triumph 1915-1938, by Lawrence Thompson: *William H. Pritchard* 747
Rommel Drives On Deep Into Egypt, by Richard Brautigan: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The RSVP Cycles, by Lawrence Halprin: *William Stafford* 481
Ruining the New Road, by William Matthews: *William H. Pritchard* . 563
Scattered Returns, by L. E. Sissman: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The Seamless Web, by Stanley Burnshaw: *Guy Davenport* 339
The Secret Lives of Lawrence of Arabia, by Phillip Knightley and Colin Simpson: *Edward W. Said* 759
Selected Poems, by Anna Akhmatova tr. by Richard McKane: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Selected Poems, by [Eugène] Guillevic, tr. by Denise Levertov: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Selected Poems, by Yves Bonnefoy, tr. by Anthony Rudolf: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Selected Verse, by Georges Zuk: *Hayden Carruth* 180
A Serial Biography, by Tom Raworth: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Shake It For the World, Smartass, by Seymour Krim: *William H. Pritchard* 365
Since Silent Spring, by Frank Graham, Jr.: *William Stafford* .. 481
Skin Diving in the Virgins, by John Malcolm Brinnin: *Vernon Young* 733
Speaking to Each Other: Volume I, About Society; Volume II, About Literature, by Richard Hoggart: *William H. Pritchard* 365
The Spenserian Poets, by Joan Grundy: *Roger Sale* 355
Star Poems, by Michael McClure: *William H. Pritchard* 563
The Stonefish, by John McIntosh: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
T&G, The Collected Poems (1936-1966), by Lorine Niedecker: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Technicians of the Sacred, ed. by Jerome Rothenberg: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Terracide, by Ron M. Linton: *William Stafford* 481
Them, by Joyce Carol Oates: *Guy Davenport* 154
The Third Book of Criticism, by Randall Jarrell: *William H. Pritchard* 365
Transparence of the World, by Jean Follain, tr. by W. S. Merwin: *Vernon Young* 733
Travels With My Aunt, by Graham Greene: *William H. Pritchard* .. 162
The Treacherous Years: 1895-1901, by Leon Edel: *Robert Garis* 143
Trout Fishing in America, by Richard Brautigan: *Guy Davenport* .. 154
The Twelve and Other Poems, by Alexander Blok, tr. by Jon Stallworthy and Peter France: *Vernon Young* 733
The Undiscovered Country, by Julian Mitchell: *William H. Pritchard* 162
The Unsubstantial Castle, by Robert Rushmore: *Guy Davenport* 154
Untitled Subjects, by Richard Howard: *William H. Pritchard* 563
Vital Parts, by Thomas Berger: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Voices, by Antonio Porchia, tr. by W. S. Merwin: *Hayden Carruth* . 180
War of Time, by Alejo Carpentier: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
The Way of a World, by Charles Tomlinson: *William H. Pritchard* 563
We Weep for Our Strangeness, by Dennis Schmitz: *Hayden Carruth* 180
Westward to Laughter, by Colin MacInnes: *William H. Pritchard* 162
What Now My Love, by Floyd Salas: *William H. Pritchard* 162
When the War Is Over, by Stephen Becker: *William H. Pritchard* .. 162
Will They Ever Finish Bruckner Boulevard?, by Ada Louise Huxtable: *Marvin Mudrick* 767
The Wit of Love, by Louis L. Martz: *Roger Sale* 355

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Wondering Where You Are, by Robert Peterson: *Hayden Carruth* 180
The World of Premchand, by Premchand: *J. Mitchell Morse* 327
Wright Morris: A Reader: *William H. Pritchard* 162
The Writing on the Wall, by Mary McCarthy: *William H. Pritchard* 365
The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson; Volume I: Diaries, Prayers, and Annals, edited by E. L. McAdam, Jr. with Donald and Mary Hyde; Volume II: The Idler and the Adventurer, edited by W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell; Volumes III, IV, and V: The Rambler, ed. by J. W. Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss: *Marvin Mudrick* 278
The Zigzag Walk: Poems 1963-1968, by John Logan: *William Dickey* . 344

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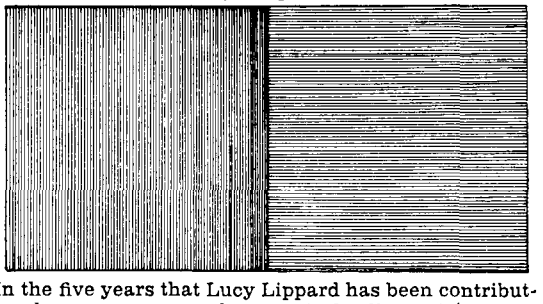

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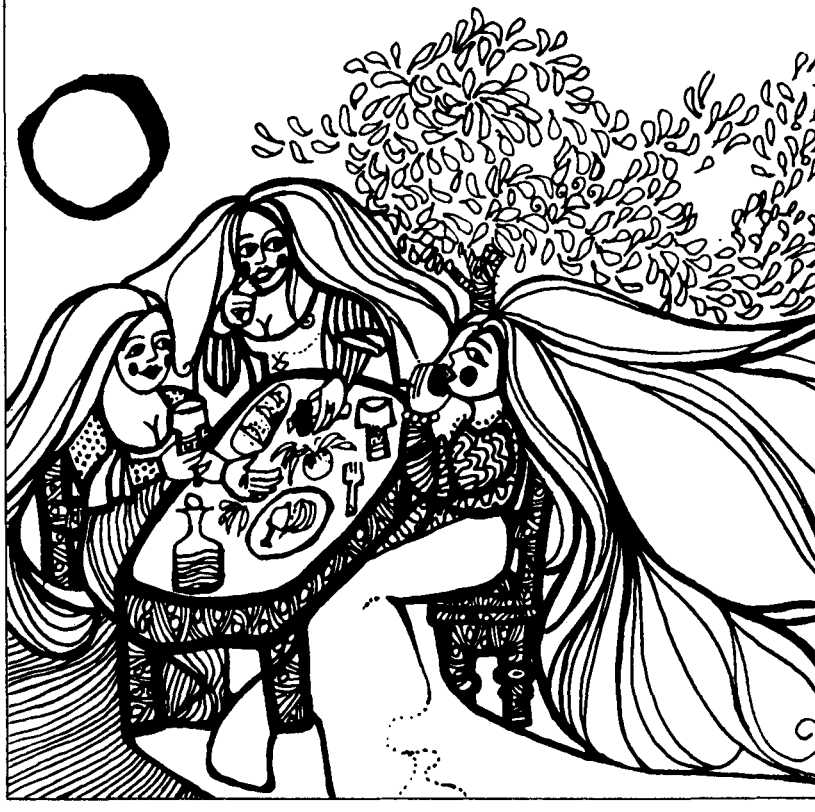

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1923 oil on canvas
39⅜ × 31⅞"
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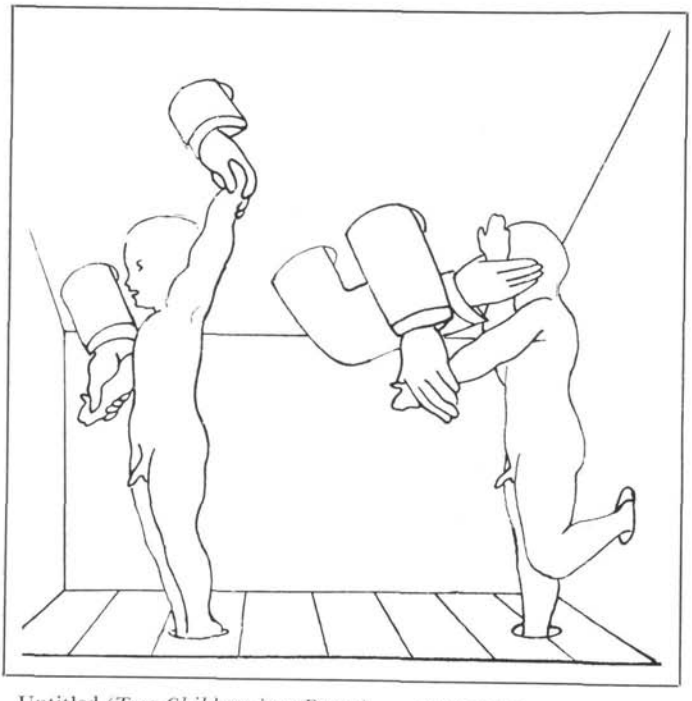

Untitled *(Two Children in a Room)*
1922 ink on paper
13 × 11 cm.
(collection A. D. Mouradian, Paris)

(Photographs of figures 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9 courtesy The Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Pontus Hultén, director, Figures 1, 5, 7 courtesy The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

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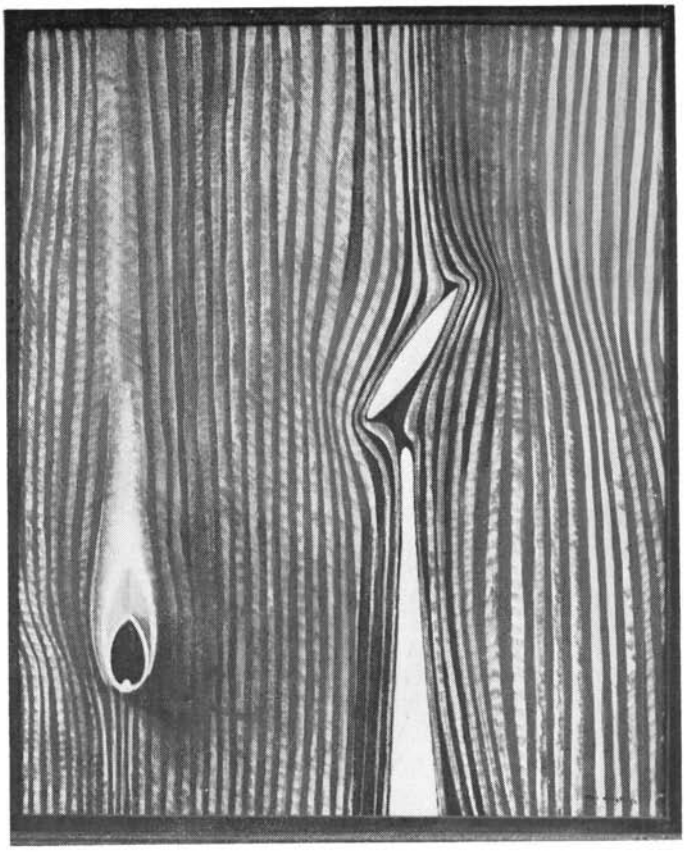
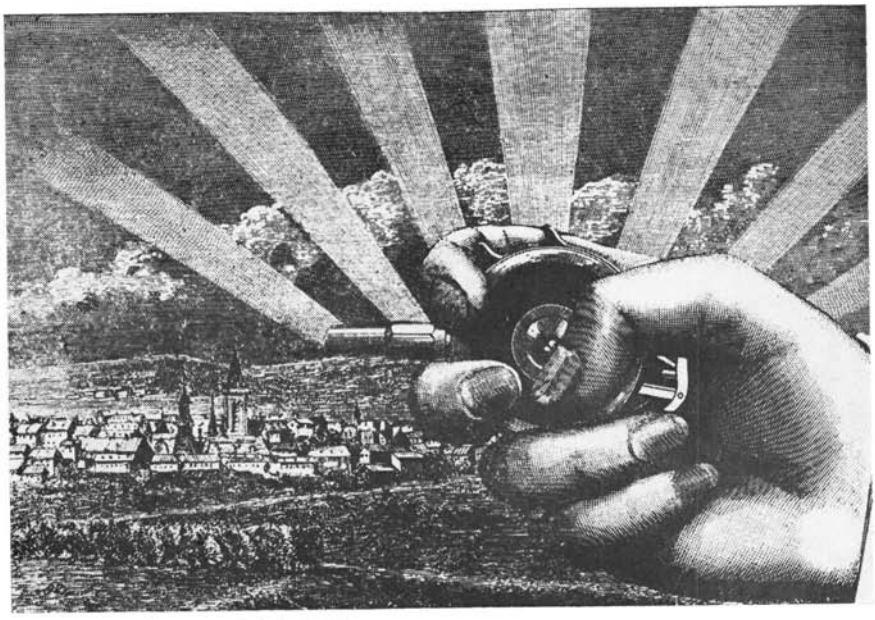


The Blind Swimmer
1934 oil on canvas
36¼ × 28⅞"
(collection Mr. and Mrs. Julien Levy; Bridgewater, Connecticut)



"Le Paysage change trois fois (III)"
from *La Femme 100 têtes*
1930 engravings and collage

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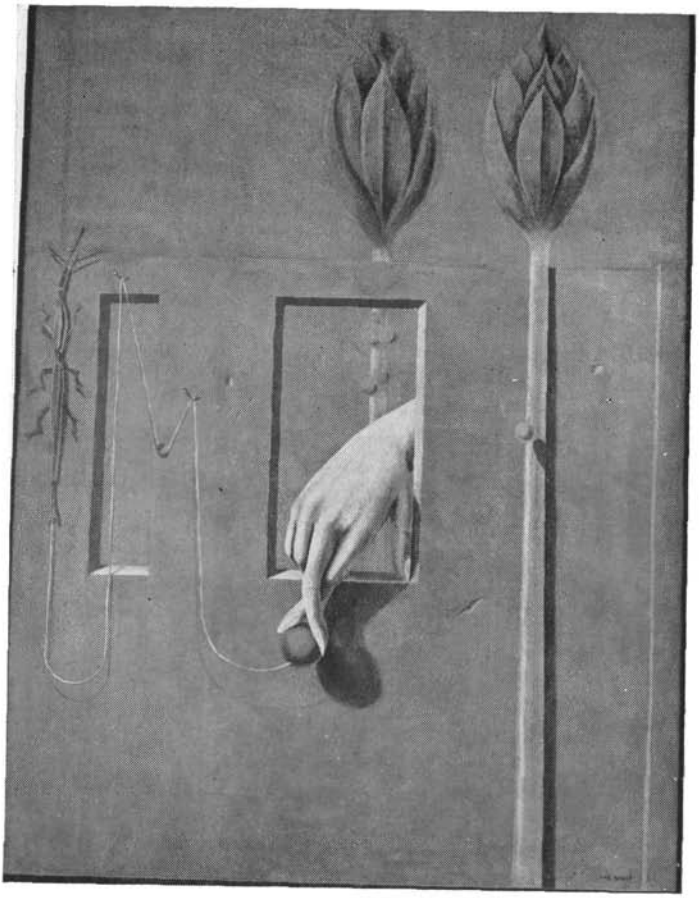
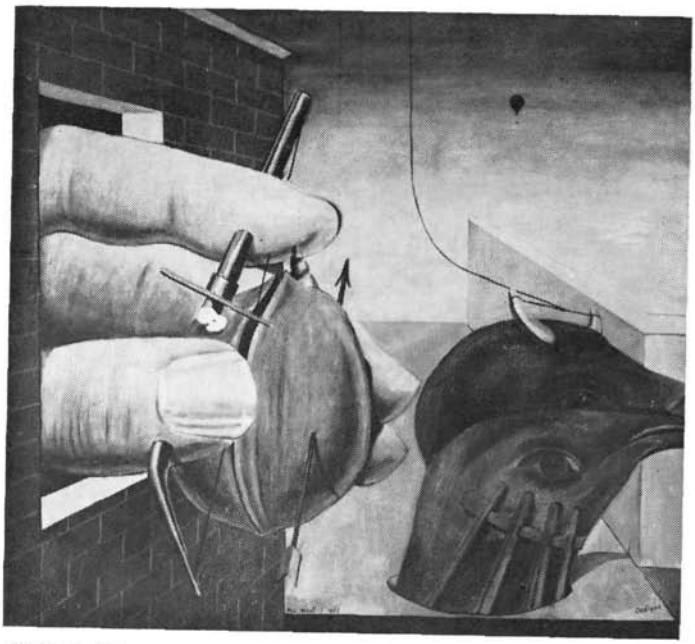


Au premier mot limpide
1922 oil on canvas
232 × 167 cm

(collection Galerie Francois Petit, Paris; formerly on wall of Paul Eluard's house, Eaubonne)



Oedipus Rex
1922 oil on canvas

35 × 45¾"
(private collection, Paris)

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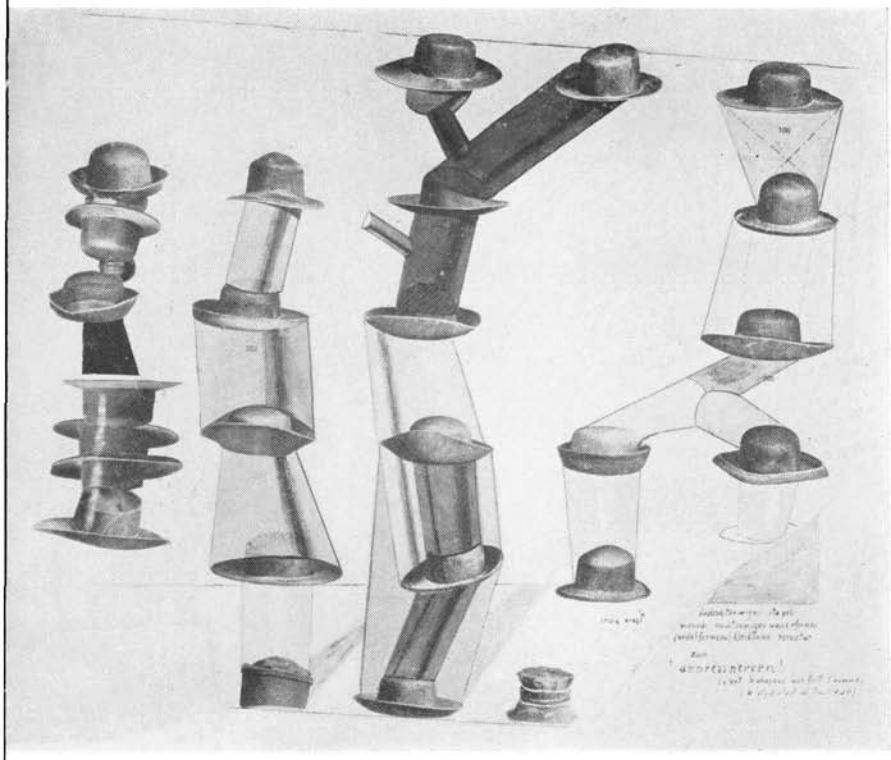
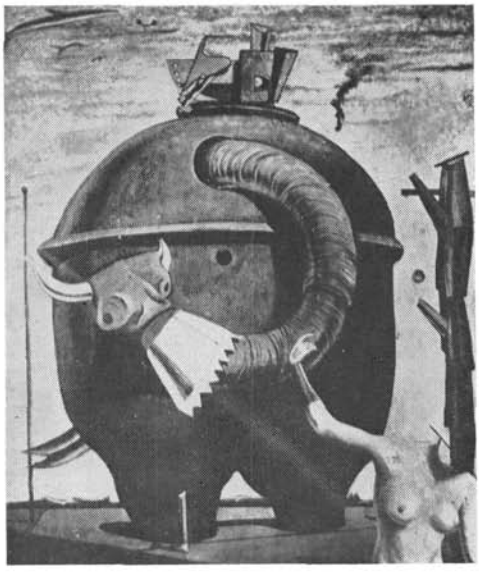


The Hat Makes the Man
1920 pasted papers, pencil, ink, watercolor
14 × 18″
(The Museum of Modern Art, New York)

Revolution by Night
1923 oil on canvas
45⅝ × 35″
(collection Sir Roland Penrose, London)



Elephant of the Celebes
1921 oil on canvas
49¼ × 42⅛″
(collection Sir Roland Penrose, London; formerly collection Paul Eluard)

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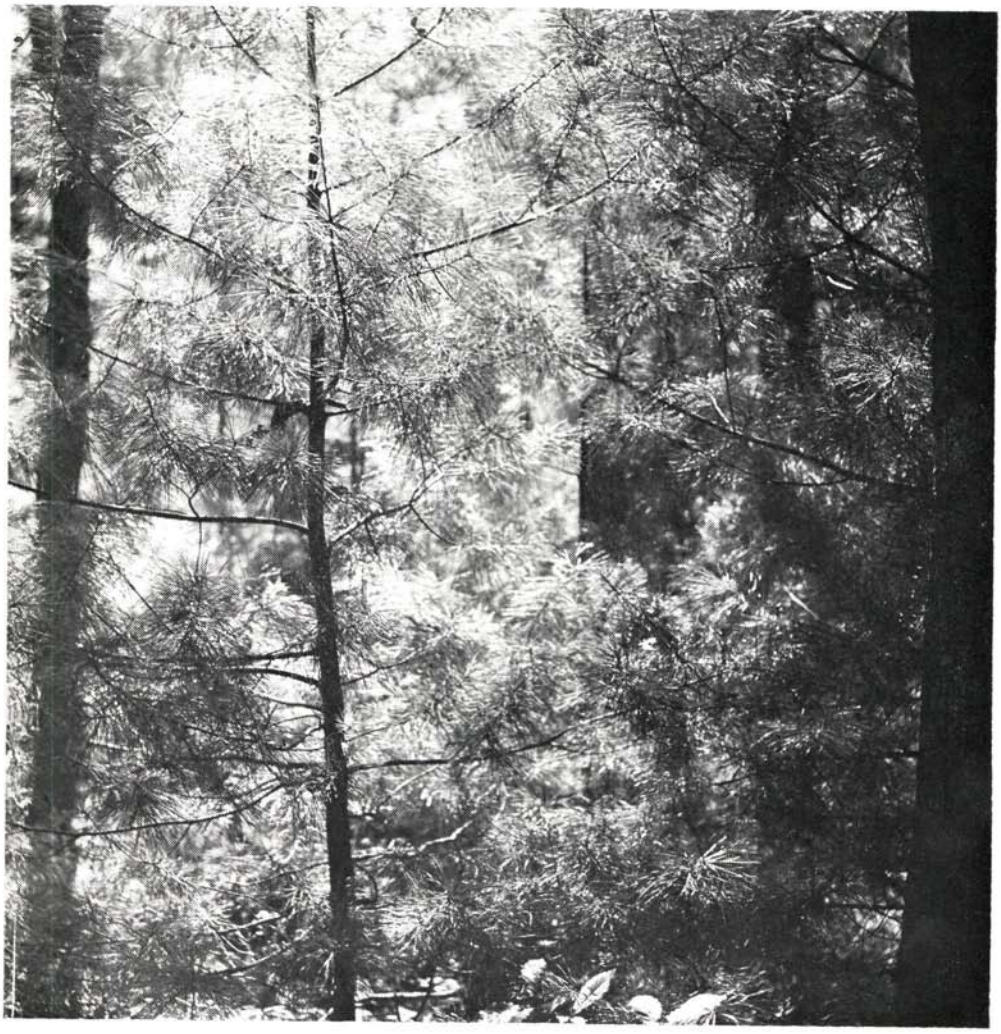

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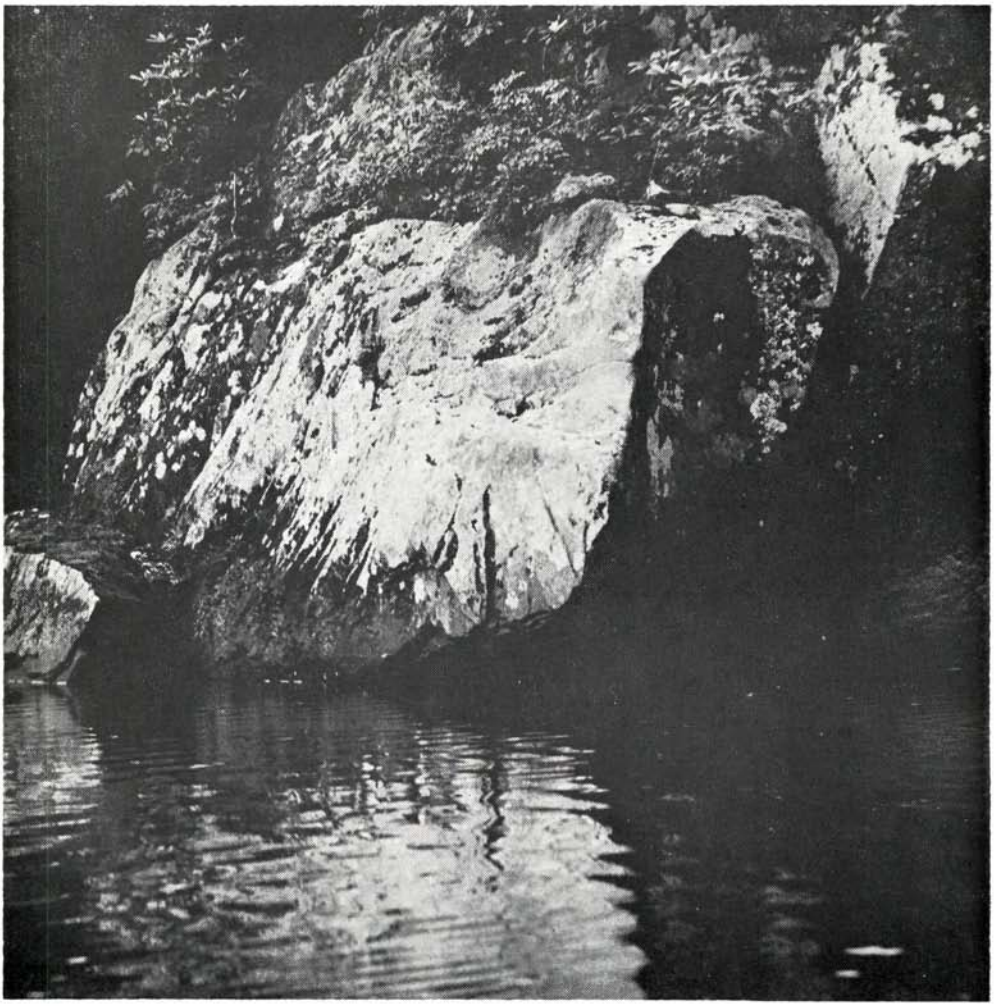

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